

# In Defense of Revolutionary Continuity

by Paul Le Blanc and Dianne Feeley (1983)

## I. Trotsky and Twentieth-Century Revolutions

Among revolutionaries of the twentieth century, few have contributed as much as Leon Trotsky. He combines decisive action with theoretical audacity—as an early militant in the Russian socialist movement, as a major figure in the Russian revolution of 1905, as a leader second only to Lenin in the first successful socialist revolution in 1917, as the organizer of the Red Army that defended Bolshevik Russia in its earliest days, and as the foremost defender of the revolutionary and democratic essence of Marxism in the face of bureaucratic degeneration and Stalinist dictatorship. Although he was assassinated more than forty years ago by an agent of Stalin, Trotsky's political contributions remain a vital resource for Marxists of today.

Like other Marxists of his generation, particularly V.I. Lenin and Rosa Luxemburg, Trotsky contributed to developing a perspective suited to the age of imperialism. Unlike Lenin and Luxemburg, however, the fact that he survived the post-World War I period, and witnessed the era of Hitler, Stalin, and rising American imperialism, gives his writings a more contemporary character. A sense of some of the qualities he brought to this task is suggested by Isaac Deutscher:

Political leader, sociologist, economist, war captain, military theorist, outstanding “specialist” on armed insurrection, historian, biographer, literary critic, master of Russian prose, and one of the greatest orators of all times, Trotsky brings his searching and original mind and his extraordinary power of expression to every field of his activity. He treats every subject he tackles in his own way, as no one has treated it before or after. Even when sometimes he repeats the commonplaces of Marxism, he rediscovers, as it were, the truth they contain and invests them with fresh life, so that with him they are never clichés; he restates them in order to deduce from them novel and creative conclusions. He is, in many ways, the most orthodox of Marxists, but his personality dispels the odor of orthodoxy. He speaks with authority, not as one of the scribes; and in spirit, temperament, and style he is closer to Marx himself than any of Marx's disciples and followers.[\[1\]](#)

Central to the rich body of Trotsky's theoretical contributions is his formulation of the *theory of combined and uneven development* and the *theory of permanent revolution*.

Marx had noted that the development of the means of production and a series of struggles between classes had combined, at least in Western Europe, to bring about a succession of different class societies: slavery, feudalism, capitalism. Marx also argued that a socialist society could be brought about only on the basis of the high level of economic development achieved by capitalism.

Originally, Marxists were inclined to assume that socialist revolution was possible only where these preconditions had fully matured, countries such as England, France, Germany, and the United States. They also tended to believe that the less capitalistically developed regions of Eastern Europe, Asia, Africa, and Latin America would have to pass through a similar capitalist evolution before being ripe for socialist revolution. But as the technologically advanced capitalist states increasingly expanded into the more technologically backward parts of the globe at the end of the nineteenth century, the new imperialism brought about two unexpected results. On the one hand, its policies of ruthless plunder introduced distortions that impeded the development of the exploited regions. On the other hand, there was an incredible cultural diffusion—the absorption into the precapitalist colonial cultures of weapons, machines, and even institutional structures taken over bodily from the advanced capitalist countries.

Socialists in the 1890s and early 1900s began to debate the implications of these developments. A minority in the Second (Labor and Socialist) International favored the “civilizing” mission of imperialism, which they argued would bring the “backward” peoples closer to the possibility of socialism. Others recognized the inhumanity and reactionary character of colonialism, and they favored solidarity between the workers' movement in the imperialist countries and the workers and oppressed peoples of the exploited regions. Initially, however, even these Marxists were not prepared to imagine that the less developed countries could accomplish more than democratic revolutions that would pave the way for a capitalist development providing the material basis for socialism.

Trotsky was the first to challenge this conception. (In developing the new perspective, he collaborated briefly with the German Marxist Alexander Helphand, who used the pen name Parvus. Even Parvus, however, was not prepared to go as far as Trotsky.) Trotsky's initial analysis, in 1905, was limited to Russia, a country on the borderline between development and backwardness. Yet his study of the specific dynamics of Russia's evolution suggested a general law of development he later summarized in this way:

Unevenness, the most general law of the historic process, reveals itself most sharply and complexly in the destiny of the backward-countries. Under the whip of external necessity their backward culture is compelled to make leaps. From the universal law of unevenness thus derives another law which, for the lack of a better name, we may call the law of *combined development* —by which we mean a drawing together of the different stages of the journey, a combining of the separate steps, an amalgam of archaic with more contemporary forms.[\[2\]](#)

By the beginning of the twentieth century, vast sections of the “less developed” world had come under the domination of the advanced capitalist countries. The invasion of industrial and finance capital had dramatically altered the noncapitalist societies—modern factories being superimposed on semifeudal structures, traditional social, cultural, and political structures merging and fusing with capitalism in odd combinations.

For Trotsky, this meant that in these countries the class dynamics inherent in the revolutionary struggle would be different from those of the classic bourgeois-democratic revolutions of Western Europe. Of course, his analysis corresponded in important ways to that of other Russian Marxists, particularly the *Militant* Bolshevik wing Lenin led in the Russian Social Democratic Labor Party (RSDLP). This is not surprising, given their common theoretical heritage.

Already in the nineteenth century Marx and Engels had noted that capitalists were not the most reliable leaders of the revolutions against feudalism that brought capitalism to power. In the French Revolution of 1789-93 it was the urban poor and petty bourgeoisie, led by Robespierre's Jacobins, who dealt most severely with the reactionary aristocracy. Working from this historical example, an important part of the Russian Marxists by 1905 had already grown to deeply mistrust the sincerity of the democratic professions of the Russian capitalists. Trotsky stood with Lenin in this left wing of the RSDLP, which predicted that the capitalist liberals would give backhanded support to the tsar in a crisis.

This inconsistency of liberalism was grounded in a fear that anti-capitalist demands would be unleashed by the working class and the poor in the course of unseating the ruling tsarist aristocracy. But, unlike the world situation at the time of the French Revolution, the rise of imperialism in Europe and the United States had given a sort of two-tiered structure to the world and involved a conservatizing foreign pressure on capitalists in undeveloped countries of a sort that did not exist in the classic bourgeois revolutions.

Internally weak, the national bourgeoisie in countries dominated by imperialism became intimately linked to foreign capital. This implied an inability to lead the struggle for national autonomy—a mass movement raised to seize imperialist property might devour the property of local capital as well. This also suggests an inability to carry through agrarian reform, inasmuch as the mobilization of the peasantry to eliminate semifeudal privileges of a landowning aristocracy could unleash popular dynamics that might also threaten the bourgeoisie, which was tied very closely to the landlords. Nor would the bourgeoisie be able to offer consistent leadership in establishing a genuinely democratic state, because this could also enable the insurgent masses to carry through policies that might jeopardize the situation of the relatively weak capitalist layer. The need for a democratic revolution was urgent in Russia—and remains urgent in the less-developed, imperialist-dominated countries today—but another class had to come forward to play the role of liberator.

The dilemma facing Russian Marxists was this: How can a revolution be made that will sweep away the vestiges of feudalism, solve the tasks of agrarian reform in a predominantly peasant country, and provide rights for a growing working class? These were the *democratic tasks* that the bourgeois-democratic revolution was supposed to accomplish. But the bourgeoisie was too weak; the working class, although highly concentrated, was only a small fraction of the population; and the vast peasantry, while capable of angry uprisings, was too fragmented to coordinate and consolidate its victories.

Lenin and Trotsky agreed, in contrast to the moderate wing of the RSDLP, the Mensheviks, that the bourgeoisie was not a candidate to lead the overthrow of tsarism. But from 1905 until well into World War I, Trotsky stood virtually alone in the Russian Marxist movement in maintaining that the working class was capable of providing the central leadership of the democratic revolution, in alliance with the peasantry, and that this revolution, to be successful, would necessarily flow directly into the initiation of a socialist revolution. That is, the revolution must have a combined character, intertwining the democratic and socialist tasks; in order to sweep away the vestiges of the old semifeudal order, it was necessary to combine the struggle for democratic tasks with the struggle for workers' power. Such a combination could lead inexorably to the overturn of capitalism itself.

A proletarian revolution in Russia would generate a revolutionary upsurge of the working classes in other countries, particularly Germany. This was vitally important, Trotsky believed, because the task of surpassing the productivity of the capitalist system and thus establishing the economic precondition for socialism could not be achieved in backward Russia alone. The success of the struggle for socialism in each country would be interrelated with the degree of success in other countries. Just as capitalism was a world system, so could socialism only be achieved on a global scale. Through a cooperative relationship, industrially advanced, post-capitalist countries would soon create a world socialist republic.

Lenin and the Bolsheviks incorporated this orientation into their thinking in the course of World War I, which culminated in the Russian revolution of 1917. And this orientation imbues the pronouncements of the Third (Communist) International in its first four congresses, under the leadership of Lenin and Trotsky.

This revolutionary internationalist perspective was later a starting point for Trotsky's critique of Stalinism. A prolonged pause in the world revolution caused a sector of the leadership in the USSR to advance the idea of building "socialism in one country." Trotsky characterized this idea as "a skinflint reactionary Utopia" in an economically undeveloped country like the early Soviet Union.<sup>[3]</sup> He insisted that Communist strategy begin from the overall needs of the world struggle against capitalism, which included both defense of the Soviet state and extension of the revolution, with the aim of merging successful socialist governments into larger geographical entities. In contrast, Stalin viewed foreign Communist parties mainly as bargaining chips for the purpose of reaching agreements with sectors of world capitalism to strengthen the military or economic security of the Soviet state.

In the impoverished conditions of the USSR in the early 1920s, a careerist layer tended to be drawn toward the ruling Communist Party simply because it controlled secure jobs. An apparatus faction arose within the party, hostile to communism but following Stalin in giving lip service to the slogans of the movement. Its adherents began to acquire and defend material privileges that separated them from the rest of the population and from the honest Communists who had no interest in personal gain. Lenin, in his last year, had formed an alliance with Trotsky to initiate a profound struggle against this development.

After Lenin's death, Trotsky led the working-class sector of the party in seeking to resist this deepening bureaucratization. The bureaucracy responded with repressive measures against its critics and also against a dissatisfied working class. As Trotsky later commented, “The leaden rump of the bureaucracy outweighed the head of the revolution.”<sup>[4]</sup> These were the roots of Stalinism, a phenomenon Trotsky was able to analyze penetratingly—and to which he counterposed the perspectives he had shared with Lenin: revolutionary internationalism and proletarian democracy.

## **II. The Process of World Revolution**

Studying Trotsky's Marxism is not merely a means of better understanding the evolution of Russian Communism and the origins of the Soviet state. While his theory of permanent revolution was anticipatory of views later shared by the great majority of Russian Communists, these theoretical advances were lost again in the Stalin counterrevolution and disappeared from those currents in the working-class movement influenced by the Stalinist interpretation of Bolshevik history.

Moreover, after the Stalinist debacle, the small countercurrent that rallied to the side of Trotsky represented for several decades the only organized tendency in world Communism that sought to maintain scientific Marxism in analyzing new phenomena in world politics. This was of particular significance in understanding the bureaucratic degeneration of the Soviet Union. But Trotsky and the small movement he founded also left an important legacy in analyzing the causes of the victory of Nazism in Germany and in offering insights into the political dynamics of other advanced capitalist countries.

Even today, when many new revolutionary forces have appeared on the world scene seeking to relearn Marxism in their own way, Trotsky's continuation of Leninism is essential for grasping the revolutionary process as a whole on a world scale.

Of special importance is Trotsky's analysis of Stalinist betrayal of revolutionary opportunities in Germany, France, and Spain in the 1930s. Trotsky also insisted on a strategic orientation for the working class based on the interrelationship of the three main sectors of revolutionary struggle: in the imperialist countries; in the capitalist nations oppressed by imperialism; and in the movement for workers' democracy against the hardened bureaucratic castes that rule in countries like the Soviet Union, those of Eastern Europe, and China. The prospect of socialist revolution in countries throughout the world, leading to the formation of a world socialist government, remains a live issue in world politics today.

In the last decade, the Pax Americana that followed World War II has broken down. It has been replaced by renewed interimperialist competition and a succession of worldwide capitalist economic crises. Since the world recession of 1974-75, inflation has savaged the living standards of working people and destabilized the currencies of advanced and underdeveloped capitalist countries alike, with the greatest damage being done in the neocolonial countries. In Britain and the United States, the ruling class has been on an austerity offensive aimed at smashing the trade-union movement and securing a historic

lowering of wages and social services. At the same time, capitalism's adversary, the working class, is proportionally greater than ever before in every sector of the world. This proletarianization of world politics reinforces the interconnectedness of the revolutionary process.[\[5\]](#)

The deepening economic crisis has raised the level of social struggle, most directly in the semicolonial countries, but also in the Soviet bloc, which has become more and more enmeshed in the world capitalist economy through trade agreements and development loans from Western banks.

The experience of the last four years highlights one of the central ideas of Lenin's Bolshevism: the need for a conscious working-class leadership to contend with other forces to head the revolutionary process. A good example of this need can be seen by contrasting Iran, where the socialist and communist left failed to produce such a leadership, with Nicaragua, where it has shown a capacity to move in this direction.

1979 saw massive insurrections toppling two hated dictatorial figures, Somoza in Nicaragua and the shah in Iran. Powerful armies in each country disintegrated in the process. In both cases, broad sectors of the society participated in the overthrow, from bourgeois forces to the urban working class. Also in both cases, opposition to the repressive regimes had taken religious expression. Since their revolutions, both countries have suffered from the economic boycott the United States has mounted, and each has been dragged into a prolonged, draining border war. But despite the similarities that exist, fundamental differences can explain the subsequent divergence of those two revolutions.[\[6\]](#)

In Nicaragua a revolutionary government is in power that has taken steps in opposition to the interests of imperialism and the Nicaraguan bourgeoisie. The clash between the masses led by the Sandinista National Liberation Front, on the one hand, and the old ruling classes and their supporters, on the other, is becoming sharper and sharper. It has reached the stage of a major armed invasion by counterrevolutionaries backed by U.S. imperialism. A decisive showdown is in sight—one that must end either in the overthrow of the still dominant economic power of the bourgeoisie and the creation of a workers' state resting on nationalized property, or in defeat for the revolution.

The revolutionary developments in Nicaragua stand as a positive example of what can be accomplished by revolutionary mobilizations of the masses when they develop a perspective of class independence and defense of their own interests. In contrast, the situation in Iran shows what kind of problems are created when such mass mobilizations come under the leadership of bourgeois or petty-bourgeois forces with a class-collaborationist outlook. The Iranian revolution that toppled the shah occurred shortly before the victory of the Sandinistas in Nicaragua. Yet while in Nicaragua the masses have been able to move toward independence from the stranglehold of imperialism and to organize themselves to fight for their own interests, the Iranian revolution has seen the ever-increasing subordination of the workers and peasants to the rule of the bourgeois government headed by the Islamic Republican Party (IRP).

In Nicaragua, democratic rights and open discussion over perspectives are replacing a fifty-year heritage of repression. Despite the lack of a modern infrastructure, the backwardness of an agriculture-based economy, the small amount of aid they receive from the bureaucratically deformed workers' states, and the growing danger of direct U.S. military intervention, the Nicaraguans continue to deepen the process of control over their own lives.[\[7\]](#)

Essential to the success of the revolution is the development of a strong system of workers' democracy and power, directly involving the oppressed in the key economic, political, and military decisions. The Nicaraguans identify politically, in many ways, with the Cubans, who overturned capitalist property relations more than twenty years ago. They have received vital aid from the Cubans—a fact that draws hostility from the U.S. government.

But in Iran the Khomeini regime is an obstacle to deepening the revolution. It has outlawed most political organizations, including the Tudeh (Communist) party; launched a brutal war on the Kurdish people who demand their right to autonomy; stopped the further development of workers' councils (*shoras*); closed the universities; imposed legislation barring women from certain job categories, and codified women's inequality in law. The government is controlled by Islamic fundamentalists, who have passed legislation that disregards the religious rights of others. In fact, the regime has launched an attack on every organization that could pose a challenge to its rule, covering its repression with populist, anticommunist, and anti-imperialist rhetoric. To date, more than 30,000 have been executed under the current government, and thousands more fill the jails.[\[8\]](#)

The toppling of the shah will always remain a historic achievement, no matter what the final outcome in Iran. This act itself was an important blow against the power of the imperialists. But history shows time and again that even the most powerful mass mobilizations are not sufficient in and of themselves to lead to victory. They must develop a leadership capable of acting decisively to establish a proletarian government.

The revolutionary process continues to move forward, particularly in Central America, but also beyond. The development of a workers' party in Brazil, the upsurges in the Philippines and South Korea, the continued struggle of Blacks in South Africa and of Palestinians in the Mideast, the emergence of an opposition to the Pinochet regime in Chile—all indicate that the forces at work in Central America are at work throughout the underdeveloped countries of the world.

It is in the underdeveloped countries dominated by imperialism that the effects of the capitalist economic crisis are the most devastating. The accumulated foreign debt these countries owe now totals more than \$600 billion. Many superexploited countries must use their entire export income just to service their debt. At the same time, international financial bodies raise their interest rates and impose shorter terms and austerity programs, strangling these poor nations financially. The fact that the average per-capita income in



this region is one-fourteenth that of the advanced capitalist countries reveals the potential for revolutionary upheaval.[\[9\]](#)

Still tied to the world capitalist market, the workers' states of Eastern Europe and China suffer from a basic contradiction between their planned economies and the parasitism of their bureaucratic elites. They have been further fettered by the bureaucracy's willingness to run up debts with Western banks on the expectation that the capitalist system will continue to expand.

The upsurge of the Polish workers stands as the highest development to date of the political revolution against bureaucracy. The development of a mass-based trade union, Solidarnosc, its alliance with Polish farmers and intellectuals, and its confrontations with the bureaucracy, all underscore the capacity of the Polish masses to overthrow the parasitic caste. It is clear that a compromise cannot be worked out between the interests of the masses and those of a bureaucracy—a *political revolution* is necessary. This would mean the working masses establishing democratic institutions that give them control over the government and the collectivized economy and ejecting the bureaucracy from its positions of power.

Despite the setbacks Solidarnosc has suffered since the 1981 military takeover, the Polish workers have not been defeated. The Stalinist apparatus is not able to reassert its control over society or provide the masses with a decent life. Resistance continues through underground bulletins, Radio Solidarnosc broadcasts, work slowdowns and strikes, huge demonstrations, and massive rejection of the officially sanctioned unions. In the process of defending itself against repression, the Polish working class has shown that it alone has the capacity to chart an economic and political course that can truly liberate Poland.[\[10\]](#)

In the centers of imperialism, a staggering 34 million people were officially unemployed in mid-1983. Bankruptcies are at record numbers. Industrial capacity has fallen to less than 70 percent of full production in most of the capitalist world. Working people in Western Europe and the United States are counseled to make sacrifices because the economy is in a downturn.[\[11\]](#)

At the same time, these capitalist governments—mired in huge military budgets and bailouts to corporations to keep the economic system afloat—are imposing cutbacks in social welfare programs that have been won over the last . fifty years. This increasing tension between what working people and the unemployed need and what the governments do for big business has produced the beginnings of a political crisis in the advanced capitalist world.

The combativity of the working class is reflected in the rising number of strikes, in the electoral victories of socialist and labor parties in several European countries as well as in Australia. It is also reflected in the links the trade unions are forging with social struggles such as the antimissile and women's movements, and in the workers' growing awareness of the interrelationship between the capitalist government's domestic and foreign policies.



In the heartland of imperialism, for example, U.S. citizens raise the slogan “Jobs, Not War” against the Reagan administration's stepped-up intervention in Central America and the Caribbean.

### **III. The Crisis in the Socialist Workers Party**

The Socialist Workers Party was once seen as a defender of Trotskyist “orthodoxy.” In fact, some even felt that this orthodoxy had come to be applied in a somewhat rigid manner.

Perhaps the clearest example of that kind of schematism was reflected in the present party leadership's initial response to the Nicaraguan Sandinistas. Because the Sandinistas were not Trotskyists but rather Fidelista-influenced revolutionaries who were seen as relying too greatly on a guerrilla-warfare perspective, the SWP leadership viewed them as incapable of smashing the Somoza dictatorship. In the June 11, 1979, issue of *Intercontinental Press*, the SWP leadership chose to publish a major article that predicted a downturn in the mass struggle in Nicaragua. The article argued that the Sandinistas' “erroneous conceptions have disastrous results for the political education of the masses.”[\[12\]](#) Five weeks later, of course, the Sandinistas led a popular insurrection that overthrew Somoza.

A similar schematism had, unfortunately, infected the perspectives of the leadership of the SWP in regard to the manner and pace of the radicalization of American politics in the 1970s. The SWP had begun to play central roles in the antiwar, women's liberation, and student movements. But this experience was overgeneralized. One consequence was that the party's continued commitment to a working-class struggle was, for the most part, not translated into practice. Opportunities for at least some SWP members to go into industry and to play a role in the unions were seriously neglected. Theoretical “orthodoxy” coexisted with shortsighted pragmatism. What linked the two was a schematic approach to theory and practice.

In 1969 Jack Barnes gave a major speech at the party's national convention, outlining perspectives for the future. Commenting on the development of a mass radical consciousness in the United States during the 1960s, he asked:

Is there reason and evidence to believe that this process of radicalization will continue to spread and deepen, or is it just a brief flurry, a reaction to a momentary crisis within the general context of a big expansion and forward march of imperialism? In other words, will we go forward to a more revolutionary decade in the 1970s, or is the real truth that after this brief interlude of radicalism we will head back to the political conservatism of the 1950s?[\[13\]](#)

In 1970 Barnes boldly asserted that what differentiated the SWP from every other tendency on the American left was the understanding that “there will be no reversal of this radicalization before the working masses of this country have had a chance to take power away from the American capitalist rulers.”[\[14\]](#)

Reality turned out to be far more complex than was allowed for in the “either/or” possibilities Barnes laid out. Yet the perspective of the SWP, as it made its way through the 1970s, continued to posit the radicalization's growing momentum. In the mid-1970s, seeing the antiracist struggle in Boston as a key indication of this continued momentum, the leadership anticipated “a wave of Bostons”[\[15\]](#)—a wave that failed to materialize. When the SWP decided to concentrate its attention on the industrial working class, the party leadership overstated the pace of working-class radicalization.[\[16\]](#) In fact, the process had not proceeded as far or as fast as the SWP leadership wanted to believe.

As the 1980s opened, the general SWP framework of the previous decade appeared to be in disarray. It soon became obvious that the party's central leadership (without attempting to involve the SWP membership in drawing up a critical balance sheet) had developed a new framework. But while the old framework had been an attempt, however schematic or unsuccessful, to utilize Trotskyist perspectives, the new framework showed few traces of those perspectives. At the 1980 Socialist Educational and Activists Conference of the SWP, major presentations contrasted Castroism to the “semisectarian” Fourth International and suggested that Castroism was far superior.[\[17\]](#)

Of course revolutionaries today recognize that struggles in Central America and the Caribbean are of decisive importance. But in asserting that this region had become *the* “center of world politics,” the SWP leadership appears to have blurred its perceptions of what is actually happening in other parts of the world. Perhaps most serious has been the party's reactions to events in Iran. Although the Iranian revolution was enthusiastically embraced by the SWP, this tended to take the form of relatively uncritical support to the Khomeini regime, which was hailed as “an anti-imperialist government”—despite its increasingly repressive, anticommunist, and anti-working-class policies.[\[18\]](#) The SWP tended to adopt a similar stance toward leaders in other semicolonial countries who combined populist and anti-imperialist rhetoric with dictatorial rule.[\[19\]](#)

Antibureaucratic struggles in the bureaucratized workers' states—once covered extensively in the party press—tended to be ignored. Nonetheless, the SWP reacted with enthusiasm to the upsurge of the Polish workers. But with the imposition of martial law, the SWP leadership insisted that even socialist- or trade-union-led demonstrations in the United States in solidarity with the Polish workers were “objectively reactionary” and would, whatever the intentions of the organizers, “play into the hands of imperialism.”[\[20\]](#) SWP leaders counterposed defense of the Central American revolutions to defense of the Polish workers, as though the party could not defend both but had to subordinate one to the other. Soon after, relatively uncritical articles about Stalinist-ruled countries began to appear in the party press.[\[21\]](#)

The new framework also had a profound impact on SWP perspectives for the United States. There was a growing depreciation of social movements that the SWP had once been active in building—the feminist movement, the antiwar movement, the antinuclear movement, etc. There was a tendency to abstain from trade-union struggles, the unemployed movement, and struggles in working-class communities. In the Black movement, the SWP focused its energies on the National Black Independent Political

Party, but it greatly underestimated the obstacles that had to be overcome if this formation would be able to realize its potential.

Increasingly, the SWP would relate to these social struggles simply by holding a forum or covering a political event for the party press. Party members might attend such an event—but, more often than not, simply to sell copies of the *Militant*, or pass out a SWP campaign statement. The SWP message generally suggested that only the emulation of the Nicaraguans and Cubans—establishing a workers' and farmers' government—could address the needs of the masses in the United States. All too often, the party chose to abstain from actual struggles in this country.

Beginning in 1981, the SWP leadership initiated a purge of members who opposed the new orientation. The mechanism for conducting the purge was the institution of new organizational norms that grossly distorted democratic centralism in a highly restrictive and undemocratic manner. Over a hundred expulsions were engineered in a two-year period, and additional comrades were driven out of the party because of the intimidating atmosphere.

Such an orientation runs counter to the revolutionary Marxist approach of Trotsky. The Fourth International—which Trotsky helped to establish and which previous leaderships of the SWP had helped to build—is correctly seen by the Barnes leadership team as a major obstacle to the new orientation. Barnes and his cothinkers have therefore advanced a perspective which would have the Fourth International adopt a line leading to its dissolution into a new “mass Leninist international” whose political leadership would be provided particularly by the Cuban Communist Party. Significantly, the Cubans have demonstrated no interest in such a project. Nonetheless, the SWP has launched the journal *New International* for the purpose of advancing this goal.

The centerpiece of the new magazine's first issue is Jack Barnes’ “Their Trotsky and Ours: Communist Continuity Today.” In that article, he lays out some of the most important theoretical underpinnings of the new orientation.

#### **IV. “Changed Continuity”**

In “Their Trotsky and Ours,” Jack Barnes explains that “new experiences *change* our revolutionary continuity.”<sup>[22]</sup> It is worth pausing for a moment over this formulation.

*Webster's New World Dictionary of the American Language* offers this definition of the word *continuity*: “1. the state or quality of being continuous. 2. a continuous flow, series, or succession; unbroken, coherent whole.” This does not, in any way, imply changelessness, but indicates that changes flow organically from what went before.

Barnes uses the word *continuity* in a very different way. He tells us that from 1928 “a guiding concept of our entire world movement, including the SWP” has been fundamentally wrong.<sup>[23]</sup> He asserts that it must be replaced by a very different concept, one that Trotskyists have rejected for years but that has been propagated by a different

political current. He does *not* say that Trotsky's concept must be further developed and that this will result in a convergence with others. No, he insists that the concept was wrong and must be replaced.

How can this assertion be squared with the meaning of the word *continuity* ? In this way: Barnes defines political continuity as “the evolving consciousness of the vanguard of a class.”<sup>[24]</sup> (This phrase requires some translation: The SWP is the vanguard; Jack Barnes is the leader of the vanguard; he has changed his mind about some things, and he is working to “evolve the consciousness” of the party.)

The logic of using the word *continuity*, then, seems to run as follows: We have fundamentally changed our ideas, but because both the rejected ideas and the new ideas have been held in the same brain, there is continuity. This stretches the meaning of the word very far indeed.

In reflecting on which of the classics Barnes consulted for his supple methodology, one is reminded of Lewis Carroll's *Through the Looking Glass*. “When I use a word,” Humpty Dumpty said, in a rather scornful tone, “it means just what I want it to mean—neither more nor less.” But we must join skeptical Alice in responding: “The question is whether you *can* make words mean so many different things.”<sup>[25]</sup> To be precise, to “change” continuity means breaking with what went before. And what the dictionary and logic suggest, a careful reading of Barnes's article will confirm: We are faced with *a break in continuity*.

The way that Barnes phrases his argument, however, is designed to gloss over and minimize the depth of this break. Before examining the substance of his changed outlook, let us clear away the fog of this bogus “continuity” so that we can appreciate the originality of Barnes' contribution.

Barnes tells us that the programmatic continuity of communism “goes back to Lenin's pre-1917 positions captured in his formula of the revolutionary democratic dictatorship of the proletariat and peasantry, not to Trotsky's alternative perspective of the permanent revolution.” *Lenin's positions are very good*: “Unlike Trotsky, Lenin presented a strategy for the transition from the democratic to the socialist revolution based on a concrete understanding of the shifting class alliances at each stage of this gigantic process of political, social, and economic transformation.” *Trotsky's positions are not very good*: “If taken back to incorporate Trotsky's differences with Lenin before the 1917 Russian revolution, and then brought forward to include the leftist errors beginning in 1928... then permanent revolution leads us off the axis of our political continuity with Bolshevism and the first four congresses of the Comintern.”<sup>[26]</sup> In short, Lenin must be distinguished from Trotsky. Lenin represented a superior political perspective.

There is a profound *discontinuity* between this way of looking at Lenin and Trotsky and the views expressed by James P. Cannon, the founder of American Trotskyism. Barnes is reluctant to admit this. In an earlier presentation of his own views, Barnes attempted to use the following 1929 quotation from Cannon in support of his new position: “We know

that Trotsky and Lenin had differences in the prerevolutionary struggle, and we know that Bolshevism took shape and the Comintern was founded on the basis of Lenin's doctrine, to which Trotsky came over.”[\[27\]](#) But of course Cannon is referring to the fierce polemics between Lenin and Trotsky over the nature of the revolutionary party—on which Trotsky did conclude that he had been utterly wrong.

As Barnes himself points out, Cannon had been won over to Trotskyism on the basis of Trotsky's 1928 critique of the Stalin-Bukharin draft program for the Comintern, a document Barnes now sees as rife with anti-Leninist error, but “around which the initial cadres of our movement in North America and internationally were subsequently gathered and educated.” It is hardly surprising, then, that Cannon would say: “Lenin-Trotsky'-those two immortal names are one. Nobody has yet tried to separate them; that is, nobody but scoundrels and traitors.”[\[28\]](#) Cannon was incorrigible:

I have noticed a general tendency both of the ultraleftists (Oehlerites) and the pseudoleftists (Shachtmanites) to contrast Lenin to Trotsky and to refer to Lenin as the primary authority. This is nonsensical; Trotsky is Lenin, plus sixteen years of further experience and further development of Marxist thought.[\[29\]](#)

Barnes sharply disagrees, insisting that in the sixteen years after Lenin's death, Trotsky veered off in a way that disoriented revolutionaries, that “Trotsky's insistence on tracing the continuity of the Fourth International to his theory of permanent revolution” was a continual source of sectarian errors “both in his time and in ours.”[\[30\]](#)

In fairness to Jack Barnes, he continues to speak favorably of some of Trotsky's insights and “important contributions.” In this article, however, he finds Trotsky fully acceptable only in the golden decade of 1917-27. Only in that period, Barnes maintains, was Trotsky's outlook fully consistent with Lenin's, only in that period had he fully abandoned his pre-1917 theory of permanent revolution. Yet this is a myth that Barnes constructs to obscure his real opinions. He really cannot like Trotsky in this period, either.

The truth is that from 1917 to 1924 Trotsky continued to speak openly and approvingly of the theory of permanent revolution. In 1919, in an introduction to the republication of his 1906 work, *Results and Prospects*, he claimed that his theory had been confirmed by the 1917 revolution. In 1922, in the preface to his book *1905*, he restated his theory and again asserted “this analysis has been entirely confirmed.” In 1923, in a series of *Pravda* articles on “The New Course,” he argued against critics: “As to the theory of the 'permanent revolution,' I see no reason to renounce what I wrote on this subject in 1904, 1905, 1906, and later.”[\[31\]](#) Other examples of such statements can be found.

Yet Barnes is able to point admiringly to a 1926 speech by Trotsky to the Executive Committee of the Communist International (ECCI) in which Trotsky admits his “errors.” Trotsky's speech includes the statements that “permanent revolution,” insofar as it differed from the Leninist conception, was wrong,” and that “Comrade Lenin, his doctrine, and his party, were absolutely right as against me.”[\[32\]](#) Indeed, other such

statements can be found in this period: for example, in a letter to the ECCI, Zinoviev, Kamenev, and Trotsky wrote: “Trotsky has stated to the International that on all the fundamental questions over which he had differences with Lenin, Lenin was right—in particular on the questions of permanent revolution and the peasantry.”[\[33\]](#)

The reason that Zinoviev and Kamenev cosigned the statement, of course, was because in this period they had formed a bloc with Trotsky to lead the United Opposition against the bureaucratic conservatism of the majority faction in the Russian Communist Party led by Stalin. Isaac Deutscher has explained:

It was true that he did not believe in socialism in one country and that he had been the author of the theory of permanent revolution. However, permanent revolution had been dragged in artificially [by the Stalin faction]: he alone, not the Opposition, was responsible for that theory. As a sop to Zinoviev and Kamenev he added: “and I myself consider this issue to have been deposited in the archives long, long ago.”[\[34\]](#)

The editors of Trotsky's writings in *The Challenge of the Left Opposition (1926-27)* make the similar point that “it is likely that the label of 'Trotskyism' kept other Old Bolsheviks away from the Opposition. As a gesture to mollify that sentiment, Trotsky disavowed the theory of permanent revolution....”[\[35\]](#)

Not all of Trotsky's comrades in the Opposition agreed with such compromises. Specifically referring to the theory of permanent revolution, his close comrade Adolph A. Joffe admonished him in 1927: “But you have often renounced your right position in favor of an agreement, a compromise, whose value you overestimated. That was wrong.”[\[36\]](#) Barnes on the other hand, sees Trotsky's compromise as “one of the most succinct and accurate assessments of the differences between Lenin and Trotsky in the pre-1917 period, and of their significance from the standpoint of future developments.”[\[37\]](#)

It is striking that the Trotsky preferred by Jack Barnes is the one who, hemmed in by Stalinists and vacillating allies, was prepared for a very brief period to mute and disavow his distinctive views for the sake of compromise. This is where Barnes seeks to anchor his own claims of “continuity.”

Within a year of Joffe's criticism, however, Trotsky returned to the open defense of his theory. As he wrote soon afterward:

Not having re-read my old works for a long time, I was ready in advance to admit to defects in them more serious and important than really were there. I became convinced of this in 1928, when the political leisure imposed upon me by exile in Alma-Ata gave me the opportunity to re-read, pencil in hand my old writings on the problems of the permanent revolution.[\[38\]](#)

It is this Trotsky, who is true to himself, that Barnes finds unacceptable.



The kind of “continuity” Barnes is urging, then, is that which leads away from the fundamental perspectives of such figures as Trotsky and Cannon. Just because Barnes has broken with these perspectives, however, does not automatically mean that he is wrong. Let us examine the substance of Barnes' new viewpoint.

## V. Pages from Stalin

The very title of this section may seem provocative to some readers. After all, just because someone raises critical questions about Trotsky hardly means that he is taking cues from Stalin! And that is certainly true.

Of course, Jack Barnes himself is being somewhat provocative. With characteristic boldness, he lays it on the line: “In fact, in the 1980s it is *only* by recognizing that permanent revolution is wrong as a generalization of the communist program and strategy that we can rediscover Trotsky more richly and more accurately as the continuator of the battle of the world working class....”[\[39\]](#) Trotsky *minus permanent revolution* is a very big change indeed. Barnes assures us that this proposed alteration is not made light-mindedly. He approvingly quotes Trotsky: “Think twice before you trim Marx's beard, comrades.”[\[40\]](#) One might wonder if Barnes' proposal would trim Trotsky's beard or cut off his head. Nonetheless, the operation is deemed to be very, very necessary.

“Permanent revolution has actually been used by us in *three* ways since 1928,” Barnes writes. Here are the three ways:

[1] In a broad sense, permanent revolution has served us as a synonym for revolutionary Marxism in our time....In this sense, there is nothing that sets permanent revolution apart from the general lessons from Marx, Engels, and Lenin on which all communists, including Trotsky, base themselves. Nothing sets it apart from Marx's use of the term in 1850, nor from Lenin's use of *uninterrupted revolution* before the 1917 Russian revolution.[\[41\]](#)

[2] The second way... is to refer to Trotsky's pre-1917 position on the class dynamics and strategy of the Russian revolution, *as opposed to* that of Lenin and the Bolsheviks.... Used in this second way, permanent revolution is wrong.... To the extent that Trotsky's strategy differed from Lenin's, it undervalued the workers' alliance with the peasantry as a whole—its poor, middle, and upper layers—in the struggle against tsarism and landlordism in Russia. Trotsky had a much less accurate understanding of the relationship between the democratic and socialist revolutions in Russia, and of the class forces and tasks of the proletariat in the transition from the democratic to the socialist tasks.[\[42\]](#)

[3] Between 1928 and 1940, while Trotsky was still alive, and since then, we have used the term permanent revolution to describe the positions of our movement... that are uniquely based on and incorporate the strategic positions of Trotsky in the pre-1917 period as opposed to those of the Bolsheviks. This usage of the term poses the biggest *political* problem for us, because it has brought weaknesses into our movement associated with Trotsky's wrong pre-1917 theory.[\[43\]](#)



Thus, while the term “permanent revolution” is acceptable in a generic sense, “our movement must discard permanent revolution” in the distinctive sense in which Trotsky formulated it. The fundamental problem is that “Trotsky had a less accurate perception than Lenin of the potential role of peasant struggles in the democratic revolution against tsarism and feudal holdovers in Russia.”[\[44\]](#) Not only does Trotsky underestimate the peasantry, but he thereby misperceives the “tasks of the proletariat” as well.

Readers of Barnes' article must be urged to check the quotations he employs to advance his arguments—especially the Trotsky quotes which, more often than not, are used against Trotsky. For example, he offers this fragment from *The Permanent Revolution* :

Articles can be found in which I expressed doubts about the future revolutionary role of the peasantry *as a whole, as an estate*, and in connection with this refused to designate, especially during the imperialist war, the future Russian revolution as “national,” for I felt this designation to be ambiguous.[\[45\]](#)

Here Barnes interjects brightly: “Two such articles by Trotsky, from 1915 and January 1917, have been cited earlier.”[\[46\]](#) But why not let Trotsky finish making his point:

It must not be forgotten here that the historical processes that interest us, including the processes in the peasantry, are far more obvious now that they have been accomplished than they were in those days when they were only developing. Let me also remark that Lenin—who never for a moment lost sight of the peasant question in all its gigantic historical magnitude and from whom we all learned this—considered it uncertain even after the February Revolution [of 1917] whether we should succeed in tearing the peasantry away from the bourgeoisie and drawing it after the proletariat. I will say quite in general to my harsh critics that it is far easier to dig out in one hour the formal contradictions of another person's newspaper articles over a quarter of a century, than it is to preserve, oneself, if only for a year, unity of fundamental line.[\[47\]](#)

One expression of *Lenin's* “underestimation of the peasantry” can be found in his *Letters on Tactics* of April 1917:

It is possible that the peasants will take the advice of the petty-bourgeois party of the Socialist-Revolutionaries, which has yielded to the influence of the bourgeoisie, has adopted a defencist [i.e., pro-war] stand and which advises waiting for the Constituent Assembly, although not even the date of its convocation has yet been fixed. It is possible that the peasants will *maintain* and prolong their deal with the bourgeoisie....[\[48\]](#)

Needless to say, that is *not* how things turned out. Yet this hardly proves anything about the content or validity of Lenin's underlying strategic orientation. To argue otherwise would do as much violence to Lenin's views as Barnes does to those of Trotsky.

In any event, Barnes insists that Lenin's perspective of the “democratic dictatorship of the proletariat and the peasantry” of 1905 provides a far more adequate understanding of the

1917 revolution than any of Trotsky's discussions of permanent revolution either before or after 1917.

Barnes quotes a 1938 article by Trotsky as follows: "Lenin himself emphasized the fundamental limitation of the 'dictatorship of the proletariat and peasantry' when he openly called it *bourgeois*."

Here Barnes interrupts Trotsky to deliver this stern lecture: "I should point out here that although Trotsky repeatedly refers to the 'bourgeois democratic dictatorship' in this article, Lenin referred to the 'revolutionary democratic dictatorship,' or sometimes just the 'democratic dictatorship.' The difference is not unimportant." The extent to which this terminological quibble has any genuine importance will soon be explored.

Trotsky is then permitted to finish his thought: "By this [Lenin] meant to say that for the sake of maintaining the alliance with the peasantry the proletariat would, in the coming revolution, have to forego the direct posing of the socialist tasks."[\[49\]](#)

But it seems that Trotsky is not telling the truth. Or, as Barnes puts it:

This was not Lenin's position. The question was not one of the proletariat foregoing socialist tasks in order to maintain an alliance with the peasantry. The question was how the proletariat could weld an alliance with the peasantry *in order to* overthrow tsarism and landlordism and use the resulting governmental power to carry out the democratic revolution, while at the same time beginning to grapple with the socialist tasks, important elements of which would be posed at the outset.[\[50\]](#)

Unfortunately for Barnes, Lenin himself seems to agree with Trotsky on what his own position was. In a 1905 pamphlet entitled *The Revolutionary-Democratic Dictatorship of the Proletariat and the Peasantry*, he warns against confounding

the democratic revolution with the socialist revolution, the struggle for the republic (including our entire minimum program) with the struggle for socialism.... For this reason Social-Democracy has constantly stressed the bourgeois nature of the impending revolution in Russia and insisted on a clear line of demarcation between the democratic minimum program and the socialist maximum program. Some Social-Democrats, who are inclined to yield to spontaneity, might forget all this in time of revolution, but not the Party as a whole.

Lenin favored the participation of socialists in the provisional government that would be established by this bourgeois-democratic revolution, but he rejected the view "that the march of events will compel the Social-Democratic Party in such a position to set about achieving the socialist revolution, despite itself." Why did Lenin reject this view? For this reason:

It is the march of events that will, in the democratic revolution, inevitably impose upon us such a host of allies from among the petty-bourgeoisie and the peasantry, whose real

needs will demand the implementation of our minimum program, that any concern over too rapid a transition to the maximum program is simply absurd.[\[51\]](#)

Despite Trotsky and Lenin, however, Barnes prefers his own interpretation of what Lenin really meant.

This distinctive interpretation did not originate with Barnes. He modestly acknowledges the influence of a 1970 article entitled “Lenin and the Colonial Question” by Carlos Rafael Rodriguez, a leader of the Cuban Communist Party. Barnes describes it as “a major Marxist historical and theoretical contribution to some of the most burning political and strategic questions,”[\[52\]](#) and he has seen to it that Rodriguez' article is included as a companion piece to his own in the first issue of *New International*.

The greater part of the Rodriguez article summarizes Lenin's views on the national question, touching on differences between Lenin and certain others on the left. For those who have actually read Lenin, along with Horace B. Davis's *Nationalism and Socialism* or Michael Lowy's “Marxists and the National Question,” this portion of Rodriguez's interesting article adds little that is new.[\[53\]](#) Its greatest significance flows from the fact that it was written by a top leader of Cuba's revolutionary government. In any event, Barnes praises the author's “sense of history” and draws our attention to the several pages of Rodriguez's article that deal with the differences between Lenin and Trotsky.

What does Rodriguez say about these differences? It is, not surprisingly, fully consistent with what Barnes himself says. We urge the reader to examine Rodriguez' own words on pages 131-142 of *New International*. The following extract from a somewhat earlier article, however, constitutes a rather fair summary of the points that he (along with Barnes) offers us. It is by an even better known author, who, like Barnes, urges an acceptance of permanent revolution cleansed of its Trotskyist “impurities”:

## **THE QUESTION OF “PERMANENT” REVOLUTION**

In the pamphlet *The Foundations of Leninism*, the “theory of permanent revolution” is appraised as a “theory” which underestimates the role of the peasantry. There it is stated:

“Consequently, Lenin fought the adherents of 'permanent' revolution, not over the question of uninterruptedness, for Lenin himself maintained the point of view of uninterrupted revolution, but because they underestimated the role of the peasantry, which is an enormous reserve of the proletariat....”

This characterization of the Russian “permanentists” was considered as generally accepted until recently. Nevertheless, although in general correct, it cannot be regarded as exhaustive. The discussion of 1924, on the one hand, and a careful analysis of the works of Lenin, on the other hand, have shown that the mistake of the Russian “permanentists” lay not only in their underestimation of the role of the peasantry, but also in their underestimation of the strength of the proletariat and its capacity to lead the peasantry, in their disbelief in the idea of the hegemony of the proletariat.

That is why, in my pamphlet, *The October Revolution and the Tactics of the Russian Communists* (December 1924), I broadened this characterization and replaced it by another, more complete one. Here is what is stated in that pamphlet: “Hitherto only *one* aspect of the theory of 'permanent revolution' has usually been noted—lack of faith in the revolutionary potentialities of the peasant movement. Now, in fairness, this must be supplemented by *another* aspect—lack of faith in the strength and capacity of the proletariat in Russia.”

This does not mean, of course, that Leninism has been or is opposed to the idea of permanent revolution, without quotation marks, which was proclaimed by Marx in the forties of the last century. On the contrary, Lenin was the only Marxist who correctly understood and developed the idea of permanent revolution. What distinguishes Lenin from the “permanentists” on this question is that the “permanentists” distorted Marx's idea of permanent revolution and transformed it into lifeless, bookish wisdom, whereas Lenin took it in its pure form and made it one of the foundations of his own theory of revolution. It should be borne in mind that the idea of the growing over of the bourgeois-democratic revolution into the socialist revolution, propounded by Lenin as long ago as 1905, is one of the forms of the embodiment of Marx's theory of permanent revolution. Here is what Lenin wrote about this as far back as 1905:

“From the democratic revolution we shall at once, and just in accordance with the measure of our strength, the strength of the class conscious and organized proletariat, begin to pass to the socialist revolution. *We stand for uninterrupted revolution.* \* We shall not stop halfway....

“Without succumbing to adventurism or going against our scientific conscience, without striving for cheap popularity, we can and do say *only one thing* : we shall put every effort into assisting the entire peasantry to carry out the democratic revolution *in order thereby to make it easier* for us, the party of the proletariat, to pass on, as quickly as possible, to the new and higher task—the socialist revolution.” (See Vol. VIII, pp. 186-87.)

And here is what Lenin wrote on this subject 16 years later, after the conquest of power by the proletariat:

“The Kautskys, Hilferdings, Martovs, Chernovs, Hillquits, Longuets, MacDonalds, Turatis, and other heroes of 'Two-and-a-Half' Marxism were incapable of understanding...the relation between the bourgeois-democratic and the proletarian-socialist revolutions. *The first grows over into the second.* \* The second, in passing, solves the questions of the first. The second consolidates the work of the first. Struggle, and struggle alone, decides how far the second succeeds in outgrowing the first.” (See Vol. XXVII, p. 26.)

I draw special attention to the first of the above quotations, taken from Lenin's article entitled “The Attitude of Social-Democracy Towards the Peasant Movement,” published on September 1, 1905. I emphasize this for the information of those who still continue to assert that Lenin arrived at the idea of the growing over of the bourgeois-democratic

revolution into the socialist revolution, that is to say, the idea of permanent revolution, after the imperialist war. This quotation leaves no doubt that these people are profoundly mistaken.

\*My italics.— *J. St.*

These are, literally, pages from Stalin—comprising the entire third section of his 1926 essay “Concerning Questions of Leninism.”[\[54\]](#)

This hardly means that Carlos Rafael Rodriguez is a Stalinist—although according to the historical record, and his own autobiographical notes, he *was* a leading Stalinist for many years. The Cuban revolution changed that, although there obviously remains a certain ideological residue. Rodriguez himself writes: “I consider that it will be necessary to reexamine some of the opinions those of us active in the Communist movement since that time [the 1920s] formed about Trotsky's actions.”[\[55\]](#) He does not seem to have carried out such a reexamination in the thirteen years that have elapsed since the 1970 article appeared, however.

The fact that Jack Barnes' current innovation can be traced to half-century-old perspectives offered by Joseph Stalin should, in itself, be no reason to recoil in horror. Perhaps Stalin was right after all—at least on this question. We should examine the facts. We believe they will demonstrate that Stalin's perspective does an injustice, to put it mildly, to both Lenin and Trotsky.

## **VI. In Defense of Lenin**

The disease of idolatry all too often infects would-be revolutionaries. It is recognized that we poor mortals are very fallible and prone to confusion in the complex swirl of events. Thus, gods are fashioned, a blend of fact and fantasy based on real historical individuals. These gods knew everything from the beginning, did not make mistakes, confidently interpreted all things, and left all their wisdom in the thick volumes of their Collected Works. Because they were never wrong, they never needed to learn or grow. Anyone who disagreed with them was foolish. Anyone who presumes to add to their doctrines is absurd. If we look deeply enough into their holy texts, we will find everything we need.

Trotsky has been demoted from the ranks of the gods to the ranks of the prophets, a prophet partially disarmed, partially outcast. But we still have others—Marx, Engels, Lenin—and by rejecting the false god it is hoped that we can be accepted into a vast congregation of worshippers.

This has nothing to do with the *scientific socialism* of Karl Marx and Frederick Engels, a body of thought that came to be called Marxism and that is critical-minded, open, growing. Nor does it have anything to do with Lenin, who was, despite the idolatry which makes it difficult to see the actual person, the greatest revolutionary Marxist of our century. Lenin's greatness is rooted not only in his insightful and comprehensive utilization of Marxist theory, but in his capacity at the same time to absorb and develop

new insights, transcending the limitations of old conceptual frameworks, including frameworks that he had previously accepted and helped to buttress.

By tracing the actual *development* of Lenin's strategic orientation regarding the Russian revolution, we will be able both to review certain basic concepts in the Marxist arsenal and at the same time to appreciate Lenin's utilization of the Marxist *method*. This is the best way to defend Lenin from the mechanistic distortion of his ideas and the idolatrous distortion of him as a revolutionary (and human) being.

The young Lenin matured within a particular context, that of the embryonic Marxist movement in tsarist Russia at the end of the nineteenth century. In opposition to the revolutionary populists of that time, the early Russian Marxists argued that their backward, semifeudal country would not be able to skip over the stage of industrial capitalism. In order to comprehend Lenin's development, it is necessary to understand this early debate, which shaped his thinking.

The populists had hoped that the precapitalist communes of Russia's peasant villages might form the basis for a transition to socialism. Yet the brilliant “father of Russian Marxism,” George Plekhanov, argued in the 1880s that “every factory founded in Petersburg... strengthens the ‘flame of economic progress’” because the development of industrial capitalism “increases the possibility of a conscious movement of the working masses for their own economic emancipation.” What's more, Plekhanov reasoned,

Socialist organization [of production], like any other, requires the appropriate basis. But that basis does not exist in Russia. The old foundations of national life are too narrow, heterogeneous and one-sided, and moreover too shaky, and new ones are as yet only being formed. The objective social conditions of production necessary for socialist organization have not yet matured....[\[56\]](#)

Nonetheless, despite the impediments of tsarist absolutism, Plekhanov was able to demonstrate, capitalist economic development was beginning to transform Russia.

Plekhanov believed that capitalist development would proceed more rapidly in Russia than had been the case in Western Europe, and he asserted that “our capitalism will fade before it has time to blossom *completely*,” but he also insisted that “the course of affairs is advancing to its more or less complete victory.” He concluded that “we must admit that we by no means believe in the early possibility of a socialist government in Russia.” This, in turn, led to a particular political orientation:

Considering all that has been said we think that only one aim of the Russian socialist would not be fantastic now: to achieve free political institutions, on the one hand, and to create elements for the setting up of the future *workers' socialist party* of Russia, on the other.[\[57\]](#)

Plekhanov explicitly warned against confusing or in any way attempting to combine this democratic revolution with the socialist revolution:

Thus, the struggle for political freedom, on the one hand, and the preparation of the working class for its future independent and offensive role, on the other, such, in our opinion, is the only possible “setting of party tasks” at present. To bind together... two so fundamentally different matters as the overthrow of absolutism and the socialist revolution, to wage revolutionary struggle in the belief that these elements of social development will *coincide* in the history of our country *means to put off the advent of both*. [\[58\]](#)

Plekhanov's analysis was far more informed and penetrating than anything the previous revolutionaries of Russia had been able to offer. It represented a tremendous breakthrough, and it is hardly surprising that this provided the fundamental orientation of Russian Marxists for three decades. It was this perspective that was written into the 1903 program of the Russian Social Democratic Labor Party, a program Lenin himself (along with Plekhanov) helped to draft. [\[59\]](#)

Yet many theoretical advances fail to encompass all important aspects of reality; as reality unfolds, and certain unforeseen or insufficiently understood dynamics manifest themselves with increasing intensity, even the most profound conceptual breakthrough of an earlier period can be transformed into a stumbling block. This was the fate of Plekhanov's analysis. An examination of Lenin's pre-1917 writings suggests that for him there were tensions within this framework—but also that *it remained his own framework* in that period.

Lenin's views on the character of the Russian revolution are revealed through his discussion of history's first example of the dictatorship of the proletariat, the Paris Commune of 1871. Marxists have traditionally viewed the *dictatorship of the proletariat* as the political rule of the working class, which will inaugurate the socialist reconstruction of society. In Lenin's 1905 polemic, *Two Tactics of Social Democracy in the Democratic Revolution*, he explicitly asserted that “it was a government *such as ours should not be*.” He criticized it as “a government that was unable to, and could not, at that time, distinguish between the elements of a democratic revolution and a socialist revolution, a government that confused the tasks of fighting for a republic with those of fighting for socialism.”

It was not that he believed the Paris Commune was too democratic, but that it was too socialist. He explained: “Marxists are absolutely convinced of the bourgeois character of the Russian revolution. What does that mean? It means that the democratic reforms in the political system and the social and economic reforms that have become a necessity for Russia, do not in themselves imply the undermining of capitalism, the undermining of bourgeois rule; on the contrary, they will, for the first time, really clear the ground for a wide and rapid European, and not Asiatic, development of capitalism; they will, for the first time, make it possible for the bourgeoisie to rule as a class.”

With most Marxists of 1905, from the most moderate Menshevik to the most militant Bolshevik, Lenin had believed that Russia must go through further capitalist economic development (which was being hindered by the quasi-feudal residue associated with



tsarist autocracy) before the material basis for socialism would exist. He insisted that “the idea of seeking salvation for the working class in anything save the further development of capitalism is *reactionary*.” The overthrow of tsarism and the creation of a bourgeois republic, Lenin (along with most Marxists in 1905) believed, would constitute “a democratic prerequisite of the struggle for socialism.”[\[60\]](#)

Unlike the Menshevik leaders, however, he did not see the weak and compromised bourgeoisie of Russia as a force capable of driving the democratic revolution through to completion. At best, they would achieve a pseudodemocratic constitutional monarchy on the Prussian model. Lenin preferred the radical republican model typified by what had been achieved in the United States during the American Civil War. But the only force capable of driving through such a thoroughgoing democratic revolution, he insisted, would be a revolutionary alliance of the working class and the peasants. Thus he believed that—after the revolutionary overthrow of the tsarist autocracy—the provisional government would have to assume the form of a radical republican “*revolutionary democratic dictatorship of the proletariat and the peasantry*.” Here we see, pulling at the constraints of the conventional Marxist concept of that time, the essential impulse of revolutionary Marxism to link a mass-revolutionary upsurge with a mass-democratic regime. But to remain within the conventional framework meant to set aside the goal of a *dictatorship of the proletariat* that would move from implementing democratic measures to implementing socialist measures. It meant rejecting the Paris Commune as a model for the Russian revolution.

Trotsky once characterized Lenin's “democratic dictatorship” formula as *algebraic*. That is, the formula was designed to allow for various potentialities. This is clear from the different ways that Lenin discussed it at different times.

In notes of March-April 1905, he saw two possible courses for the Russian revolution:

“I. Will it go on to the *complete* overthrow of the tsarist government and the establishment of a republic?

“II. Or will it limit itself to a curtailment of tsarist power, to a monarchist constitution?

“In other words, are we to have a revolution of the 1789 type or of the 1848 type?... Some might add here 'or of the 1871 [Paris Commune] type'? This question must be considered as a probable *objection* raised against us by many non-Social Democrats.”[\[61\]](#)

Both the French Revolution of 1789 and revolutionary events in Europe of 1848 were perceived by Marxists as models of bourgeois-democratic revolution, the first ending in a decisive victory over the remnants of feudalism, the second ending in a compromise with such remnants. Neither had a trajectory that went beyond capitalism (unlike the Paris Commune of 1871). Lenin expressed the hope that the Russian revolution would be of the 1789 type. This clearly confines the perspective to a bourgeois-democratic framework, as was the case with most of Lenin's formulations.

Yet Lenin sometimes came up with more far-reaching formulations, perhaps the most radical being this one of September 1905:

Given the complete victory of the democratic revolution... we shall at once, and precisely in accordance with the measure of our strength, the strength of the class-conscious and organized proletariat, begin to pass to the socialist revolution. We stand for uninterrupted revolution. We shall not stop half-way.[\[62\]](#)

In notes at the end of 1905, he indicated that a socialist revolution in Western Europe (which might be sparked by revolutionary events in Russia) would be a precondition for this “uninterrupted revolution”—or as he put it, “the European workers will show us 'how to do it.'...”[\[63\]](#)

On the other hand, in *Two Tactics* he states that “we Marxists should know that there is not, nor can there be, any other path to real freedom for the proletariat and the peasantry, than the path of bourgeois freedom and bourgeois progress.” He warned that a decisive victory over tsarism “will not yet by any means transform our bourgeois revolution into a socialist revolution; the democratic revolution will not immediately overstep the bounds of bourgeois social and economic relationships; nevertheless, the significance of such a victory for the future development of Russia and of the whole world will be immense.” He argued that the democratic tasks of the revolution made possible a “singleness of will” between the proletariat and peasantry that could be the basis for their joint dictatorship, but that “the development of capitalism, more extensive and rapid in conditions of liberty, will inevitably soon put an end to singleness of will; that will take place the sooner, the earlier counter-revolution and reaction are crushed.”[\[64\]](#)

In other words, the “democratic dictatorship” would crush the tsarist and semifeudal reaction, in order to clear the way for such “extensive and rapid” capitalist development. Here, then, Lenin did not suggest that the “democratic dictatorship” would be transformed into a proletarian dictatorship, but that the “democratic dictatorship” would necessarily dissolve, and the working class would begin its struggle for a transition “from a petty-bourgeois democratic republic to socialism.”[\[65\]](#)

As Trotsky has pointed out, “Lenin brought no finished commandments from Mt. Sinai, but hammered out ideas and slogans to fit reality, making them concrete and precise, and at different times filled them with different content.”[\[66\]](#) The fact remains that while Lenin often strained mightily against the framework Plekhanov had established years before, in this period he never fully broke from it.

In the period 1914-17, however, Lenin went through an evolution that *did* enable him to transcend the old framework. The devastating international impact of World War I, the abysmal collapse of the seemingly orthodox Marxist Second International, and the profound revolutionary ferment generated among the workers and the oppressed—all compelled him to deepen his understanding of the world capitalist system, the Marxist view of the state, and the consequent requirements of revolutionary socialist strategy. The theoretical culmination of this transcendence is highlighted in *Imperialism- the Highest*

*Stage of Capitalism* and *The State and Revolution*. The practical culmination was achieved in the Bolshevik revolution and the founding of the Communist International.

The idea that Lenin's *State and Revolution* represents any kind of shift in Lenin's thinking has stirred some controversy inside the Socialist Workers Party. In 1981, Frank Lovell, the party's former trade-union director, asserted: "This brain [of Lenin] was preoccupied with the question of state power during the revolution, and while in hiding [in 1917] Lenin produced 'The State and Revolution,' a Marxist guide to the seizure of power and control of government. This is different from and far advanced beyond his earlier writings on the democratic dictatorship of the proletariat and peasantry." Jack Barnes responded angrily: "*State and Revolution* was not a revision of or advance over what Lenin had written earlier. Where did Lenin ever write that?"<sup>[67]</sup> Barnes' question is posed as if it were unanswerable. Let us answer it.

As late as 1916, Lenin had sharply disagreed with N.I. Bukharin precisely over the Marxist theory of the state. Bukharin, at that time a young theoretician and activist in the extreme left wing of the Bolshevik Party, had argued that "Marxists are not statist" and that "social democracy must strongly emphasize its hostility in principle to state power." Bukharin went on to offer a revolutionary perspective in which "the proletariat destroys the state organization of the bourgeoisie, utilizes its material framework and creates its own temporary state organization of power." Lenin rejected all of this as "decidedly incorrect" and even as "semi-anarchist."<sup>[68]</sup>

On February 17, 1917, however, in a letter to Alexandra Kollontai, Lenin wrote: "I am preparing (have almost got the material ready) an article on the question of the attitude of Marxism to the state. I have come to conclusions which are even sharper against Kautsky than against Bukharin.... The question is exceptionally important. Bukharin is far better than Kautsky."<sup>[69]</sup> This has obvious significance, given Lenin's immense respect for Kautsky's pre-1914 interpretations of Marxism. The "article" he was preparing, of course, was *The State and Revolution*.

Two days later, in a letter to Inessa Armand, Lenin repeated all of this and added, "I have... arrived, it seems to me, at very interesting and important conclusions."<sup>[70]</sup> Jack Barnes may feel that *The State and Revolution* did not represent "an advance over what Lenin had written earlier," but Lenin obviously disagrees with him on this (as on much else). In these letters Lenin still expresses some mild reservations about Bukharin's views, but by May 1917, when Bukharin returned to Moscow, Lenin's companion, N.K. Krupskaya, relayed the message that "Vladimir Ilyich asked me to tell you that he no longer has any disagreements with you on the question of the state."<sup>[71]</sup>

The advance of Lenin's thinking is, once again, revealed in the way he discusses the Paris Commune of 1871 in *The State and Revolution*: "The Commune is the first attempt by a proletarian revolution to *smash* the bourgeois state machine; and it is the political form 'at last discovered,' by which the smashed state machine can and must be *replaced*." He added that "the Russian revolutions of 1905 and 1917, in different circumstances and under different conditions, continue the work of the Commune and confirm Marx's

brilliant historical analysis.”[\[72\]](#) This way of discussing history's first proletarian dictatorship differs fundamentally with the manner in which Lenin had approached it when advocating the “democratic dictatorship of the proletariat and the peasantry.” Also worth noting is that he projects the new perspective *backward* to encompass the 1905 revolution. In *Letters From Afar*, Lenin makes precisely the same points:

The proletariat...if it wants to uphold the gains of the present revolution and proceed further, to win peace, bread and freedom, must “*smash*,“ to use Marx's expression, this “ready-made” state machine and substitute a new one for it by *merging* the police force, the army and the bureaucracy with *the entire armed people*. Following the path indicated by the experience of the Paris Commune of 1871 and the Russian Revolution of 1905, the proletariat must organize and arm *all* the poor, exploited sections of the population in order that they *themselves* should take the organs of state power directly into their own hands, in order that *they themselves should constitute* these organs of state power.[\[73\]](#)

In this, Lenin's views had converged with those of Trotsky, who in 1906 had argued that “the experience of the Commune was of direct importance for the Russian working class because, as a result of the whole preceding historical development, it was directly faced with the problem of seizing power.”[\[74\]](#) In early 1917, Trotsky's message was the same: “Remember the Commune! we socialists will say to the insurgent workers' masses. The bourgeoisie has armed you against an external enemy [during World War I]. Refuse to return your weapons, like the Parisian workers refused in 1871!... Tear the state machinery from their hands! Transform it from the instrument of bourgeois oppression into an apparatus of proletarian self-rule.”[\[75\]](#)

We can see, then, that despite Jack Barnes's impatient protests, Lenin's thinking continued to advance on the questions of the state and revolution. This had obvious implications for the development of revolutionary strategy in Russia. It meant a convergence of the perspectives of Lenin and Trotsky. This also had obvious implications for the old “democratic dictatorship” formula. In later years, Trotsky sought to explain Lenin's abandonment of that formula, much to Jack Barnes' chagrin.

In “Their Trotsky and Ours,” Barnes attacks Trotsky for having written (in a 1938 essay) that “the formula of the 'democratic dictatorship of the proletariat and peasantry' [was something] which Lenin, influenced by historical experience, had acknowledged to be without value. As always in history, a formula that had outlived itself served to cover a political content which was the direct opposite of that which the formula had served in its day.”[\[76\]](#)

Barnes is as impatient with Trotsky as he was with Frank Lovell. He is so impatient that he even forgets to quote the second sentence, which modifies the meaning of the first. The fragmentary quote that Barnes presents is, he assures us, “factually incorrect,” and he elaborates: “Trotsky was wrong in asserting that Lenin had 'discarded' the formula of the revolutionary democratic dictatorship of the proletariat and peasantry or 'acknowledged it to be without value.' I have heard of no one who has pointed to such statements anywhere

in Lenin's published works.”[\[77\]](#) But here, too, Barnes' assertions will not withstand the weight of the facts.

In *Letters on Tactics* (April 1917), Lenin characterized “democratic dictatorship of the proletariat and the peasantry” in this way:

This formula is already antiquated....

A new and different task now faces us: to effect a split *within* this dictatorship between the proletarian elements... and the *small-proprietor* or *petty-bourgeois* elements....

The person who *now* speaks only of a “revolutionary-democratic dictatorship of the proletariat and the peasantry” is behind the times, consequently, he has in effect *gone over* to the petty bourgeoisie against the proletarian class struggle; that person should be consigned to the archive of “Bolshevik” pre-revolutionary antiques (it may be called the archive of “old Bolsheviks“)...

The formula is obsolete. It is no good at all. It is dead. And it is no use trying to revive it.[\[78\]](#)

Here we find, in one of Lenin's better-known published works, precisely the “acknowledgment” that Trotsky refers to and Barnes denies.

That Lenin had transcended his earlier framework was clear from his “April Theses,” which unleashed a storm of controversy within the Bolshevik Party. The Bolshevik newspaper *Pravda* criticized Lenin's minority position on April 8, 1917: “As for the general scheme of Comrade Lenin, it seems to us unacceptable in that it starts from the assumption that the bourgeois-democratic revolution is ended, and counts upon an immediate transformation of this revolution into a socialist revolution.”[\[79\]](#) The then-majority position, rooted in the old Bolshevik orientation for a “democratic dictatorship of the proletariat and the peasantry,” was exactly what Lenin was polemicizing against in *Letters on Tactics*, and he won a majority to the new orientation. He explained the outlook of this new majority in *The Proletarian Revolution and the Renegade Kautsky* (1918): “Beginning with *April* 1917, however, long before the October Revolution, that is, long before we assumed power, we publicly declared and explained to the people: the revolution cannot now stop at this stage, for the country has marched forward, capitalism has advanced, ruin has reached fantastic dimensions, which (whether one likes it or not) *will demand steps forward, to socialism.*”[\[80\]](#)

The October revolution, which the Bolsheviks led on the basis of this outlook, established not the “democratic dictatorship of the proletariat and the peasantry,” but the dictatorship of the proletariat. With Trotsky, Lenin had come to believe that the goals of the democratic revolution could be realized only through the proletarian revolution. In 1919 Trotsky felt able to write of his theory of permanent revolution that “the events in which we are now participating, and even our methods of participation in them, were foreseen in

their fundamental lines some 15 years ago” (when Trotsky's *Results and Prospects* was written) and that “the prospects outlined 15 years ago have become reality.”[\[81\]](#)

If Lenin disagreed with Trotsky's interpretation (which was openly circulated by the Communist International at that time), one might expect that he would at least have offered a comradely polemic against it. But Lenin didn't disagree. As the Bolshevik diplomat Adolph A. Joffe wrote to Trotsky just before his own death: “I have often told you that with my own ears I have heard Lenin admit that in 1905 it was not he, but you, who were right. In the face of death one does not lie, and I repeat this to you now.”[\[82\]](#)

Nevertheless, we still have an obligation to examine one more quotation from Lenin that Jack Barnes apparently feels supports his own interpretation. It has special weight because it was written in 1919, *after* the Bolsheviks took power:

Russia's backwardness merged in a peculiar way the proletarian revolution against the bourgeoisie with the peasant revolution against the landowners. That is what we started from in October 1917, and we would not have achieved victory so easily then if we had not. As long ago as 1856, Marx spoke, in reference to Prussia, of the possibility of a peculiar combination of proletarian revolution and peasant war. *From the beginning of 1905 the Bolsheviks advocated the idea of a revolutionary-democratic dictatorship of the proletariat and the peasantry.* [Emphasis added.][\[83\]](#)

This quotation is important because it one of the very few times *after* 1917 when Lenin even mentions the 1905 formula. To help us understand it better, we must place it back into the context from which it has been wrenched. It comes from the article, “The Third International and Its Place in History.” In that article, Lenin writes: “The world-historical significance of the Third, Communist International lies in that it has begun to put into practice Marx's greatest slogan, the slogan which sums up the century-old development of Socialism and the working class movement, the slogan which is expressed by the term: dictatorship of the proletariat.” Notice that he does not say *democratic dictatorship of the proletariat and the peasantry*. Unlike the phrase “dictatorship of the proletariat,” the 1905 formula is mentioned in the article only once in passing, in the quote offered by Barnes. Lenin goes on to ask: “How is it that the first country to establish the dictatorship of the proletariat, to organize a Soviet Republic, was one of the most backward of European countries?”[\[84\]](#) He offers a partial list of reasons. The words that Barnes quotes constitute the second item on Lenin's list. The reader is urged to turn to Lenin's works to study the entire list. Here we will deal only with the significance of this second item.

Lenin is clearly not urging the Communist International to embrace the “democratic dictatorship” formula, otherwise he would say so. Instead, he repeats and stresses the quite different “proletarian dictatorship” formula, which he had explicitly rejected in 1905 as ultraleft. In fact, Lenin is here simply stating a historical fact: “From the beginning of 1905 the Bolsheviks advocated the idea of a revolutionary-democratic dictatorship of the proletariat and the peasantry.” Why does he draw our attention to this? Because he obviously believes that it served the historic function of educating the Bolshevik cadres in the necessity of a worker-peasant alliance, a revolutionary alliance



independent of the bourgeoisie. And this was the element in the 1905 perspective that retained its validity even after the “democratic dictatorship” formula as a whole had outlived itself.

In Lenin we see a critical-minded and self-critical revolutionary capable of absorbing new lessons and moving forward. These qualities—obscured in the static accounts of Stalin and Barnes—enabled him to provide leadership for the world's first socialist revolution.

## **VII. Trotsky's Theory**

“At times, out of wanting to escape what seem to be dangerous Stalinist nets,” wrote Carlos Rafael Rodriguez, “one falls into Trotskyist traps.” According to Rodriguez, the most dangerous of such traps is the theory of permanent revolution. Trotsky in 1905, he tells us, “brandished” the slogan “No tsar, but a workers' government,” thereby skipping over the peasant movement. In fact, Rodriguez writes, Trotsky “rejected any governmental coalition or alliance of any kind,” and he adds that Trotsky's “direct invocation of socialism and the dictatorship of the proletariat was not only alienating the revolution's supporters among the agrarian bourgeoisie, middle peasants, and the least politicized sectors of the poor peasants, but was even propelling them into the arms of tsarism.”[\[85\]](#) These are serious charges, coming as they do from an influential Latin American revolutionary leader. Nor does Jack Barnes say anything to contradict his new mentor.

There are several problems with this interpretation. First there is a factual error: Trotsky never advocated the slogan Rodriguez accuses him of brandishing.[\[86\]](#) Another more serious problem is that there is no historical record of Trotsky actually alienating or “propelling into the arms of tsarism” any actual or potential class allies of the proletariat.[\[87\]](#) A still more serious problem is this: If calling for the proletarian dictatorship and for socialism was wrong in Russia because it would drive the nonproletarian masses into the arms of tsarism, then how can we explain the triumph of Lenin, Trotsky, and the Bolsheviks who called for these very things in 1917? Perhaps most serious of all, however, is the fact that Rodriguez's description of Trotsky's theory is totally false.

Trotsky's theory of permanent revolution has been misunderstood not only by its opponents, unfortunately, but also by too many would-be partisans, who turn it into a mechanistic schema they counterposed to living revolutions—such as those in Central America and the Caribbean. The actual theory, however, is an invaluable tool for revolutionaries. What follows is a brief exposition that strives to let Trotsky speak for himself. It focuses on his outlook on the revolutionary process in Russia, which was later applied more generally.

Trotsky saw the Russian revolution as having a dual character:



So far as its direct and indirect tasks are concerned, the Russian revolution is a “bourgeois” revolution because it sets out to liberate bourgeois society from the chains and fetters of absolutism and feudal ownership. But the principal driving force of the Russian revolution is the proletariat, and that is why, so far as its method is concerned, it is a proletarian revolution.[\[88\]](#)

This contradictory formulation reflected the dialectical contradiction in reality itself, which Trotsky sought to highlight while suggesting what it implied:

It is possible to limit the scope of all the questions of the revolution by asserting that our revolution is *bourgeois* in its objective aims and therefore in its inevitable results, closing our eyes to the fact that the chief actor in this bourgeois revolution is the proletariat, which is being impelled towards power by the entire course of the revolution.

We may reassure ourselves that in the framework of a bourgeois revolution the political domination of the proletariat will only be a passing episode, forgetting that once the proletariat has taken power in its hands it will not give it up without a desperate resistance, until it is torn from its hands .by armed force.

We may reassure ourselves that the social conditions of Russia are still not ripe for a socialist economy, without considering that the proletariat, on taking power, must, by the very logic of its position, inevitably be urged toward the introduction of state management of industry....[\[89\]](#)

It may be best, however, to step back from this to see how Trotsky saw the process actually unfolding.

First of all, the revolution would *not* simply be a narrowly composed project of the working class.

The proletariat can only achieve power by relying upon a national upsurge and national enthusiasm... [and by acting] as the revolutionary representative of the nation, as the recognized national leader in the struggle against absolutism and feudal barbarism.

Of central importance, Trotsky insisted, was the forging of a worker-peasant alliance:

As the petty bourgeois urban democracy in the Great French Revolution placed itself at the head of the revolutionary nation, in just the same way the proletariat, which is the one and only revolutionary democracy of our cities, must find a support in the peasant masses and place itself in power—if the revolution has any prospect of victory at all.

While Trotsky did not believe that the worker-peasant alliance would mean that both classes would have equal weight in the government (because he argued that, unlike the working class, the peasantry was incapable of being an independent political force), he believed that the peasantry would “rally to the regime of workers' democracy” because

the domination of the proletariat will mean not only democratic equality, free self-government, the transference of the whole burden of taxation to the rich classes, the dissolution of the standing army in the armed people and the abolition of compulsory church imposts, but also recognition of all revolutionary changes (expropriations) in land relationships carried out by the peasants.[\[90\]](#)

More than this, however, Trotsky insisted that the victory of a proletarian revolution “by no means precludes revolutionary representatives of non-proletarian social groups entering the government. They can and should be in the government: a sound policy will compel the proletariat to call to power the influential leaders of the urban petty-bourgeoisie, of the intellectuals and of the peasantry.” He was no less insistent that “the hegemony should belong to the working class.” Trotsky saw this as the *dictatorship of the proletariat*. He was quite willing to utilize other labels (“workers' democracy” or “dictatorship of the proletariat supported by the peasantry” or “coalition government of the working class and petty bourgeoisie”), but he stressed that the reality must involve the “dominating and leading participation” of the working class, “the rule of the proletariat.”[\[91\]](#)

The new regime would eliminate the corrupt and bureaucratic state apparatus of tsarism—“cleansing the Augean stables of the old regime and driving out its inmates, [a task which] will meet with the active support of the whole nation....” Beyond this, it would “reconstruct the State upon democratic principles, that is, upon the principles of the absolute sovereignty of the people. Its duty will be to organize a people's militia, carry through a vast agrarian (land) reform, and introduce the eight-hour day and a graduated income tax.”[\[92\]](#)

Yet the revolution at this stage would hardly have eliminated classes and class tensions, and the necessary policies of the new workers' government would in fact sharpen those tensions:

Every passing day will deepen the policy of the proletariat in power, and more and more define its *class character*.... The antagonism between the component sections [of the population] will grow in proportion as the policy of the workers' government defines itself, ceasing to be a general-democratic and becoming a class policy.

Trotsky emphasized that

the political domination of the proletariat is incompatible with its economic enslavement. No matter under what political flag the proletariat has come to power, it is obliged to take the path of socialist policy. It would be the greatest utopianism to think that the proletariat, having been raised to political domination by the internal mechanism of a bourgeois revolution, can, even if it so desires, limit its mission to the creation of republican-democratic conditions for the social domination of the bourgeoisie.[\[93\]](#)

This hardly meant an immediate socialist transformation, however. Trotsky explained that

our countryside is far too benighted and unconscious. There are still too few real socialists among the peasants. We must first overthrow the autocracy, which keeps the masses of the people in darkness. The rural poor must be freed of all taxation; the graduated progressive income tax, universal compulsory education, must be introduced; finally, the rural proletariat and semi-proletariat must be fused with the town proletariat into a single social democratic army. Only this army can accomplish the great socialist revolution.

In addition to these political and cultural prerequisites, however, there were also economic prerequisites: “The revolutionary authorities will be confronted with the objective problems of socialism, but the solution of these problems will, at a certain stage, be prevented by the country's economic backwardness. There is no way out from this contradiction within the framework of a national revolution.”[\[94\]](#)

After the experience of the Bolshevik revolution and the early years of revolutionary power, Trotsky was able to further refine this aspect of his theory. He made an important distinction between two phases of the dictatorship of the proletariat: the first phase was called simply *dictatorship of the proletariat*, the second was called the *socialist dictatorship*. “A government resting directly upon the proletariat, and through it upon the revolutionary peasantry,” he wrote, “does not yet signify the socialist dictatorship.” Referring to the profoundly revolutionary essence contained in Lenin's early formula, Trotsky explained that

the *true* democratic dictatorship of the proletariat and the peasantry, that is, the one which actually destroyed the regime of autocracy and serfdom and snatched the land from the feudalists, was accomplished not *before* October [1917] but only *after* October; it was accomplished, to use Marx's words, in the form of the *dictatorship of the proletariat supported by the peasant war*—and then, a few months later, began growing into a socialist dictatorship.[\[95\]](#)

This may have a superficial similarity to the schema of some (for example, Jack Barnes or Carlos Rafael Rodriguez) who suggest that an intermediate stage will bridge the overthrow of the capitalist state and the establishment of a workers' state. We have seen that Stalin, too, wished to utilize the “democratic dictatorship” formula of Lenin in this way. But we shouldn't blur the differences here. According to Trotsky, as opposed to Barnes or Rodriguez, the first stage *begins* when workers' rule (supported by the peasantry) is established. The second stage occurs with the extensive implementation of socialist policies by that self-same proletarian dictatorship. For Stalin, on the other hand, none of this is supposed to happen until a “bourgeois-democratic” stage is carried through by a two-class workers and peasants' government. For Stalin's followers, in practice, this was to mean sustained collaboration with “liberal” or “progressive” sections of the bourgeoisie and an indeterminate postponement of the proletarian revolution. Stalin's orientation is, of course, a distorted variation of Lenin's 1905 perspective. Rodriguez and Barnes appear to seek a more radical, less distorted reading of Lenin's 1905 position—one that puts them midway between Stalin of 1927 and Lenin of 1917.

As Lenin pointed out, the “democratic dictatorship” formula is obsolete. It is no good at all. It is dead. The revolution cannot now stop at this stage but (whether one likes it or not) will demand steps forward to socialism. The world-historic significance of the Russian revolution and Communist International lies in the fact that they began to put into practice the dictatorship of the proletariat.

It was this course of development that had been foreseen by Trotsky, who in 1905 understood that the dynamics of the Russian revolution would necessarily lead to a *deepening* of the revolutionary process:

The proletariat, once having taken power, will fight for it to the very end. While one of the weapons in this struggle for the maintenance and the consolidation of power will be agitation and organization, especially in the countryside, another will be a policy of [economic] collectivism. Collectivism will become not only the inevitable way forward from the position in which the party in power will find itself, but will also be a means of preserving this position with the support of the proletariat.

With the “deep inroads into the rights of bourgeois property,” Russia’s “democratic revolution grows over directly into the socialist revolution and thereby becomes a *permanent* revolution.” [\[96\]](#)

As these dynamics begin to come into play, however, sharp tensions and conflicts will make themselves felt within the multiclass coalition that had supported the initial democratic revolution. Trotsky warned that “the more definite and determined the policy of the proletariat in power becomes, the narrower and more shaky does the ground beneath its feet become.... The two main features of proletarian policy which will meet opposition from the allies of the proletariat are *collectivism* and *internationalism*.” Yet the moderating influence (or stiff resistance) of these allies would be counteracted by the pressures generated through the international bourgeoisie’s intense hostility toward the new regime.

Thus permanent revolution will become, for the Russian proletariat, a matter of class self-preservation. If the workers’ party cannot show sufficient initiative for aggressive revolutionary tactics, if it limits itself to the frugal diet of a dictatorship that is merely national and merely democratic, the united reactionary forces of Europe will waste no time in making it clear that a working class, if it happens to be in power, must throw the whole of its strength into the struggle for a socialist revolution.[\[97\]](#)

Trotsky recognized that, as Plekhanov had pointed out earlier, the industrial backwardness and economic underdevelopment of Russia could not provide a sufficient material or social basis for the development of a socialist society. That would be decisively affected by developments beyond Russia’s borders. “Left to its own resources,” he wrote in 1906, “the working class of Russia will inevitably be crushed by the counter-revolution the moment the peasantry turns its back on it.” The pressures of the world capitalist economy and the military hostility of the world’s capitalist governments would be brought to bear on the new socialist regime. On the other hand,

the international class struggle would be greatly intensified by a proletarian revolution in Russia, and this factor could be decisive for the revolution's final triumph:

The revolution in the East will infect the Western proletariat with a revolutionary idealism and rouse a desire to speak to their enemies “in Russian.” Should the Russian proletariat find itself in power, if only as the result of a temporary conjuncture of circumstances in our bourgeois revolution, it will encounter the organized hostility of world reaction, and on the other hand will find a readiness on the part of the world proletariat to give organized support.... It will have no alternative but to link the fate of its political rule, and, hence, the fate of the whole Russian revolution, with the fate of the socialist revolution in Europe.[\[98\]](#)

A profound revolutionary internationalism was central to Trotsky's theory of permanent revolution from the very beginning. In the late 1920s, however, Trotsky's theory went through a further evolution that deepened this internationalist component. It is worth pausing to consider the significance of this development.

The theory of permanent revolution as we know it today did not emerge full-blown from Trotsky's head in 1905. Like Lenin, Trotsky approached Marxist theory in a scientific manner. His perspectives were not derived from “timeless principles” to be superimposed dogmatically on global realities. Rather, his theory evolved through a series of successive approximations as Trotsky sought to analyze the experiences of the actual revolutionary process. It received confirmation through the Bolshevik revolution and its essential components were reflected in Lenin's perspective from 1917 onward, as well as in the program of the Russian Communist Party and the Communist International.

After 1917, the Russian experience had obvious implications for other industrially backward countries that approximated Russia's level of development. At this time, however, neither Trotsky nor Lenin nor the Comintern as a whole rushed to generalize the Russian experience for *all* underdeveloped countries. It was not automatically assumed, for example, that the Chinese struggle against reaction and imperialism would necessarily be realized through the triumph of a proletarian revolution, as had been the case in Russia. After all, in Russia the working class had formed at least 10 percent of the population. In China the proletariat constituted only 0.5 percent of the population; although in 1921 this accounted for about 1.5 million workers, it was not immediately clear to Trotsky that the relationship of forces in China would allow for a proletarian revolution.[\[99\]](#)

As late as March, 1927, Trotsky asserted that “the struggle for a workers' and peasants' government has the most immediate importance for the course of the Chinese revolution,” but that “only an ignoramus... could think that *present-day* China, with its *current* technological and economic foundations, can through its *own* efforts jump over the capitalist phase.” Rather, he felt, “the problem of the Chinese revolution growing over into a socialist revolution is right now merely a long-term option wholly dependent upon the development of the world proletarian revolution.” On the basis of further experience, however, Trotsky concluded that the Russian model was indeed applicable to China. By

September 1927 he was insisting: “The Chinese revolution at its new stage will win as a dictatorship of the proletariat, or it will not win at all.”[\[100\]](#)

With this extension of the theory of permanent revolution to Chinese realities, Trotsky soon concluded that it had general applicability. By 1929 he was prepared to sketch his theory with the broadest strokes:

Socialist construction is conceivable only on the foundation of the class struggle, on a national and international scale. This struggle, under the conditions of an overwhelming predominance of capitalist relationships on the world arena, must inevitably lead to explosions, that is, internally to civil wars and externally to revolutionary wars. Therein lies the permanent character of the socialist revolution as such, regardless of whether it is a backward country that is involved, which only yesterday accomplished its democratic revolution, or an old capitalist country which already has behind it a long epoch of democracy and parliamentarism[\[101\]](#)

He went on to indicate “three lines of thought” that are intertwined in his theory.

[1] First, it embraces the problem of the transition from the democratic revolution to the socialist.... It pointed out that the democratic tasks of the backward bourgeois nations lead directly, in our epoch, to the dictatorship of the proletariat and puts socialist tasks on the order of the day. Therein lay the central idea of the theory....

[2] The second aspect... has to do with the socialist revolution as such. For an indefinitely long time and in constant internal struggle, all social relations undergo transformation.... Revolutions in economy, technique, science, the family, morals and everyday life develop in complex reciprocal action and do not allow society to achieve equilibrium. Therein lies the permanent character of the socialist revolution as such.

[3] The international character of the socialist revolution, which constitutes the third aspect of the theory of the permanent revolution, flows from the present state of the economy and the social structure of humanity. Internationalism is no abstract principle but a theoretical and political reflection of the character of world economy, of the world development of productive forces and the world scale of the class struggle. The socialist revolution begins on national foundations—but it cannot be completed within these foundations.... In an isolated proletarian dictatorship, the internal and external contradictions grow inevitably along with the successes achieved. If it remains isolated, the proletarian state must finally fall victim to these contradictions. The way out for it lies only in the victory of the proletariat of the advanced countries. Viewed from this standpoint, a national revolution is not a self-contained whole; it is only a link in the international chain. The international revolution constitutes a permanent process, despite temporary declines and ebbs.[\[102\]](#)

What we have presented here as “Trotsky's theory” became something more than that in 1917—it became an integral part of the Bolshevik program. This can be seen, for example, if we examine *The ABC of Communism* (1919), which Nikolai Bukharin and



Evgenii Preobrazhensky were commissioned to write for the purpose of explaining the newly written program of the Russian Communist Party.

*The ABC of Communism* discusses the class dynamics of the revolution in the same way that Trotsky did:

In our revolution, which is a communist revolution, the principal role, the role of leader, has been assigned to the proletariat. The proletariat is the most united and the best organized class. The proletariat is the only class whose conditions of life in capitalist society have been such as to lead to the acquirement of sound communist views; to it alone have these conditions disclosed the true goal and the right way of attaining it. Naturally, therefore, the proletariat has led the van in this revolution. The peasants (the middle peasants and even some of the poor peasants) were far from steadfast. They were only successful when they joined forces with the proletariat.... This leading role, the dominant mission of the proletariat, finds expression in the soviet constitution.[\[103\]](#)

This results, not in a two-class dictatorship of workers and peasants, but in a one-class dictatorship of the workers (supported by the peasants) committed not only to democratic tasks but also to socialist tasks:

The proletariat cannot overthrow the old world unless it has power in its hands, unless for a time it becomes the ruling class.... Precisely because the opposition [of reactionary and capitalist forces] will inevitably be so embittered, it is necessary that the workers' authority, the proletarian rule, shall take the form of a dictatorship.... The dictatorship of the proletariat is not only an instrument for the crushing of enemies; it is likewise a lever for effecting economic transformation. Private ownership of the means of production must be replaced by social ownership; the bourgeoisie must be deprived of the means of production and exchange, must be "expropriated."[\[104\]](#)

The authors of *The ABC of Communism*, like Trotsky, saw that society would continue to undergo profound transformations after the establishment of the proletarian state, that "as the resistance of the sometime capitalists, landlords, bankers, generals, and bishops, is crushed, in like measure the system of proletarian dictatorship will without any revolution undergo transformation into communism." They certainly recognized that Russia's industrial backwardness meant that their country was "a land whose most notable peculiarity is the numerical predominance of the petty-bourgeois stratum of the population," yet they emphasized that "the Communist Party must utilize the privileges of the proletariat in order to influence the rural districts, in order to solidarize the more advanced workers with the peasants." But more than this, they pointed to the decisive importance of an international perspective that was indistinguishable from Trotsky's:

The necessity for the communist revolution arises above all from the circumstance that Russia has become intimately connected with the system of world economy. Our country is now merely a part of the world economy. If the question arises, in what way Russia can advance to the communist system in spite of the backward condition of the country, the



answer will mainly be given by pointing to the international significance of the revolution. The proletarian revolution must today be a world revolution.[\[105\]](#)

The proletarian-socialist trajectory of the Russian revolution was not only dependent on international developments, they insisted, but showed the necessary path for the workers and the oppressed of all lands:

The revolution as it develops becomes a world revolution for the same reason that the imperialist war became a world war.... Every attempt to establish a truly human society upon the old capitalist foundation is foredoomed to absolute failure.... We are thus confronted by two alternatives, and two only. There must either be complete disintegration, hell broth, further brutalization and disorder, *absolute chaos, or else communism*.[\[106\]](#)

The authors of *The ABC of Communism* felt compelled to add that “all groups, classes, and parties... which imagine that the time is not yet ripe for the coming of socialism, are, in fact, whether they wish it or not and whether they know it or not, playing the part of counter-revolutionaries and reactionaries.”[\[107\]](#) Thus even Trotsky's later extension of the theory of permanent revolution was fully consistent with the thrust of Bolshevism.

The Bolshevik program as it emerged from the crucible of 1917, incorporating Trotsky's insights and the experiences of a living revolution, became in this form a guidebook for revolutionaries throughout the world. *The ABC of Communism* was translated into many languages by the various sections of the Communist International over the next ten years, in the words of historian E.H. Carr, “circulating widely in many countries as an authoritative exposition of the 'aims and tasks' of communism.”[\[108\]](#) Only after the decisive triumph of the Stalinist bureaucracy in the late 1920s did this guidebook go out of print in the USSR—thrown on the scrapheap along with the theory of permanent revolution.

Defending this theory, therefore, means something more than simply embracing the particular idea of Trotsky. It means adhering to the revolutionary program of Bolshevism.

## **VIII. Instant Revolution or Permanent Revolution?**

Jack Barnes has been in the Trotskyist movement for more than two decades, and for more than half of that period he has been the central leader of the Socialist Workers Party. One would have assumed that he knows what Lenin and Trotsky really stood for. Perhaps in his weariness over past mistakes and in his eagerness to display new insights, he has forgotten what he once knew. One is reminded of a comment made by Trotsky: “Renegades are always distinguished by short memories or assume that other people have short memories. Revolutionaries, on the contrary, enjoy good memories, which is why it can be truthfully said *the revolutionary party is the memory of the working class*. Learning not to forget the past in order to foresee the future is our first, our most important task.”[\[109\]](#)

If Jack Barnes aspires to provide revolutionary leadership, he will certainly want to improve his memory. Genuine and critical-minded revolutionaries in the Cuban Communist Party will not be impressed by a one-time Trotskyist leader who offers demonstrably ignorant criticisms of Trotsky. Such a person could be expected at some point to make a similar hash of the ideas of Fidel or Che!

Carlos Rafael Rodriguez has never presumed to be an authority on Trotsky's ideas. It is hardly astounding, therefore, that he could fundamentally misunderstand those ideas, especially in light of Rodriguez's own political education. His misunderstanding of Trotsky's theory seems largely to be based on the only substantial quotation from Trotsky to be found in Rodriguez's article. The quotation is taken from Trotsky's 1928 critique of the Communist International's official position on China. Let us examine it carefully:

The formula of the democratic dictatorship has *hopelessly outlived its usefulness....* The third Chinese revolution... will not have a “democratic” period, not even such a six month period as the October Revolution had (November 1917 to July 1918); but it will be compelled from the very outset to effect the most decisive shakeup and abolition of bourgeois property in city and village.[\[110\]](#)

Noting that bourgeois property was *not* abolished in China in 1949, Rodriguez is able to point out: “History did not listen to Trotsky.”[\[111\]](#) He goes on to refer to the Cuban experience, in which bourgeois property was also not immediately abolished. It seems clear to him that Trotsky's theory of permanent revolution has been disproved by the unfolding of history, which is always the decisive test.

Yet anyone who carefully reads the quotation cited by Rodriguez will see that its insistence on the immediate *abolition* of bourgeois property actually contradicts the more thorough explanation of Trotsky's theory offered in *Results and Prospects*, in *The Permanent Revolution*, and in other texts that we examined earlier. Jack Barnes, who has presumably devoted years of study to Trotsky's political thought, should be able to point this out. At the very least, assuming that he takes ideas seriously, we could expect him to explain that this loose formulation is neither representative of nor essential to the core of Trotsky's analysis.

But no. He uncritically embraces Rodriguez's position. He repeats the quotation, characterizing it as “one of the central contentions” of Trotsky's position. He then writes: “The actual course of events in China shows how erroneous was Trotsky's idea that the abolition of bourgeois property in city and countryside in China was possible immediately upon the workers and poor peasants taking power.” Finally, Barnes delivers yet another stern lecture to Trotsky:

Even had a proletarian Marxist leadership stood at the head of the Chinese workers and peasants... a period of transition would have been necessary to organize and mobilize the workers and poor peasants to expropriate the exploiters and begin organizing production on an entirely new basis. This is not an instant process, as we've seen in subsequent

revolutions led by conscious proletarian Marxist forces, such as in Cuba, Nicaragua, and Grenada.[\[112\]](#)

But these important truths—which seem to have been revelations to Jack Barnes—are part of the very fabric of Trotsky's theory, as we have already seen.

If this is the case, however, why did Trotsky utilize the mistaken formulation at which Rodriguez and Barnes direct their criticism? Can we attribute the poorly chosen words to the strains, imposed by harsh conditions of exile, on Trotsky's intellectual powers? Were they a slip of the pen as he rushed to prepare his massive critique for the Comintern's Sixth World Congress? Or perhaps an overstatement which, upon reflection, he might have deleted? What can explain this loose formulation?

Fortunately, there is no need to speculate. We know the answer. The fact is that *Trotsky did not write these words*. The words were written by the translator, and the translator mistranslated.

If Barnes had been in less of a hurry to renounce the theory of permanent revolution, he might have suspected this and he might have checked the translation. Aside from the quotation being significantly at variance with other statements of Trotsky's, there is an internal contradiction in this translated passage. Consider the section of the quote which asserts that the revolution “will be compelled *from the very outset* to effect the most decisive *shake-up* and *abolition* of bourgeois property in city and village.” The words we have stressed in this passage seem oddly contradictory when taken together. From the very outset bourgeois property might be shaken up, but if one thinks it will be *abolished from the outset* then why would one bother mentioning a mere shake-up?

Puzzled by this, we approached a translator who is proficient in Russian and who had access to Trotsky's original manuscript. His findings are as follows: The Russian word *nisproverhenie* has been translated here as “abolition,” but this is too strong. (If Trotsky had meant abolition, he would have used a word such as *otmena* or *annulirovanie* or *unichtozhenie*.) The word can better be translated as “undermining” or “subverting” or “throwing down.”[\[113\]](#)

To be consistent with the general thrust of Trotsky's analysis, a superior translation to the one utilized by Rodriguez and Barnes would be this: The revolution “will be compelled from the very outset to effect the most decisive shake-up and subversion of bourgeois property in city and village.”

This did happen in every country that has experienced a socialist revolution: the most decisive shake-up and subversion—not the immediate abolition—of bourgeois property. Of course, Carlos Rafael Rodriguez is right: “History did not listen to Trotsky.” History listens to no one. But Trotsky had learned from history, and this provided insights into the future. He grasped the dynamics of revolution in the twentieth century.

The most momentous of these revolutions, after the Russian revolution, occurred in China. There is far more to be said about the Chinese revolution than is offered by Rodriguez and accepted by Barnes. First, we must turn our attention to the revolution of 1925-27, which Trotsky was discussing in his 1928 analysis. Rodriguez makes passing reference to the pioneer Chinese Marxist and leader of the Chinese Communist Party, Ch'en Tu-hsiu. In the wake of the revolution's bloody defeat, and the massacre of the Communist Party by its erstwhile Kuomintang allies, Ch'en was denounced for "opportunism" and blamed for the debacle. Rodriguez comments that "Ch'en Tu-hsiu... came from a 'Europeanist' position of disdain for nationalist ideas to adopt a 'Marxist' revolutionary nationalism.... Ch'en's rightist positions later led to his separation from leading posts."[\[114\]](#)

This is a remarkable passage, all the more remarkable because the editors of *New International* (who claim at least nominal allegiance to the Fourth International) let it stand without comment or criticism. Such a non-Trotskyist (indeed, a sympathizer of Maoism) as Edgar Snow, in his revised edition of *Red Star Over China*, felt compelled in 1968 to comment: "Ch'en, [M. N.] Roy, and [Mikhail] Borodin certainly followed directives from Stalin, who had taken control of the Executive Committee of the Comintern from Zinoviev in 1926. Thus it was *Stalin's* line which Mao here criticized by implication [as being opportunist]." Stalin's line in 1925-27 had been precisely to insist on a "Marxist" adaptation to the "revolutionary nationalism" of the Kuomintang. Snow continues: "Was Ch'en merely a scapegoat for Stalin's mistakes? In his own defense before the Emergency Party [Central Committee] meeting of August 7, 1927, Ch'en asserted that he had opposed the [Comintern] line in the spring of 1927, but that his protests were rejected; after that he had followed [Comintern] discipline to enforce Stalin's directives despite his better judgment." This is corroborated by scholars, eyewitness accounts, and documentary evidence.[\[115\]](#)

What is remarkable about Rodriguez's remarks is that he criticizes Ch'en for being too "Europeanist" to accept uncritically the Stalinist line, and then for being a "rightist" because he dutifully carried out that very same line!

Stalin laid out the Comintern line as follows:

I think that the future revolutionary government in China will in general resemble in character the government we used to talk about in our country in 1905, that is, something in the nature of a democratic dictatorship of the proletariat and the peasantry, with the difference, however, that it will be first and foremost an anti-imperialist government. It will be a government transitional to a non-capitalist, or, more exactly, a socialist development of China.... From this follows the task of the Chinese Communists as regards their attitude to the Kuomintang and to the future revolutionary government in China. It is said that the Chinese Communists should withdraw from the Kuomintang. That would be wrong, comrades. The withdrawal of the Chinese Communists from the Kuomintang at the present time would be a profound mistake. The whole course, character and prospects of the Chinese revolution undoubtedly testify in favor of the Chinese Communists remaining in the Kuomintang and intensifying their work in it.[\[116\]](#)

It is worth noting Ch'en Tu'hsiu's own evaluation:

I strongly believe that if I, or other responsible comrades, could at that time have clearly recognized the falsity of the opportunist policy, and made a strong argument against it, even to the point of mobilizing the entire party for a passionate discussion and debate, as Comrade Trotsky has been doing, the result would inevitably have been a great help to the revolution. It would not have made the revolution such a shameful failure, though I might have been expelled from the Communist International and a split in the party might have taken place.[\[117\]](#)

As Ch'en's comments indicate, on the basis of bitter experience—the brutal loss of tens of thousands of comrades and the destruction of a revolutionary workers' movement that had numbered over 2.5 million—he had concluded that Trotsky's perspective was fully applicable to China, and he became a Fourth Internationalist. But Jack Barnes remains silent about all of this.

In reality, the Chinese revolution of 1925-27 suggests a confirmation, through negative experience, of the theory of permanent revolution. Far more positively, the victorious Chinese revolution of 1949 offers a further confirmation, which is all the more significant because those in the leadership of that revolution had been vociferous opponents of Trotskyism.

After being practically wiped out in the cities, the remnants of the Chinese Communist Party had shifted their efforts to the rural hinterlands where, under Mao Tse-tung, they built up a massive base among the peasantry. Yet throughout the 1930s and 1940s, the Chinese Communists under Mao still insisted on the validity of Stalin's basic analysis. Mao explicitly noted: “In accordance with their estimation of the nature of Chinese society, the Trotskyists conclude that the nature of the Chinese Revolution at present is not bourgeois but proletarian. Without any hesitation we are opposed to this viewpoint. We restate our position that the nature of Chinese society is semi-feudal and semi-colonial and that therefore the Chinese Revolution is anti-imperialist and anti-feudal.” Chou En-lai explained that “if asked, 'What is the character of this revolution?' we can say it is a bourgeois-democratic revolution. It is not a proletarian revolution.”[\[118\]](#)

In the large areas controlled by the Chinese Red Army in the early 1930s, therefore, a “democratic dictatorship of the workers and peasants” had been proclaimed—although after the Stalinist popular-front strategy was established by the Comintern in 1935, the Chinese Communists altered their vocabulary. This was felt to be particularly important in the war against the imperialist Japanese invasion. Again, in the words of Chou En-lai, “we want to change the workers' and peasants' democratic system into a national democratic system which will include the landowners, bourgeoisie and petty bourgeoisie with the workers and peasants, and exclude only traitors.” In 1940, Mao labeled this the “New Democracy.” Even after the defeat of the Japanese, the Chinese Communist Party called for a “New Democracy” that would “allow capitalism to develop broadly in China,” as Mao put it in 1945, because “to replace the oppression of foreign imperialism

and native feudalism with the development of capitalism is not only an advance, but also an unavoidable process; it benefits the bourgeoisie as well as the proletariat.”[\[119\]](#)

In spite of this perspective, the Chinese Communists did not make the mistake of merging their forces with those of the bourgeois-nationalist Kuomintang, as they had in the 1920s. When, following World War II, the Kuomintang attacked them after turning down Mao's proposal for a coalition government, the Communists had no choice but to respond with an effective counteroffensive.

Just as Trotsky's perspective has proved to be fully applicable to China,[\[120\]](#) so is it relevant to the semicolonial countries oppressed by imperialism today.[\[121\]](#) Yet one final point must be made here.

As we have noted, Rodriguez's 1970 article offers a useful survey of Lenin's views on the colonial question, yet it is not free from problems.

The article's final section, entitled “The Test of History,” contains most of the problems that we have touched on, and it contains an additional problem in the following passage:

The class structure arising from colonial oppression in these oppressed countries is a consequence of the relations of production that have been maintained and have developed there. These relations generate, through weak industrial growth or none at all, the weakness or nonexistence of the proletariat; and, through dependence on backward agriculture, the predominantly peasant character of the population as well as the marginal proliferation of an urban petty bourgeoisie made up of merchants, proprietors, and their “layers of intellectuals” (as Lenin would put it).[\[122\]](#)

Upon this socioeconomic description Rodriguez bases much of his thinking regarding the nature of revolution in the neocolonial world, and Barnes appears to accept it without criticism or comment. Yet while this description had some validity in Lenin's time, it has less validity in 1970 and is even less true today. There has been rapid industrial growth (though the industries are largely “light” ones: textiles, assembly plants, processing, services). The urban proletariat exists and is growing—numerically and proportionally. Agriculture is increasingly modernized and brought into large-scale production for the world market. The peasantry consequently becomes increasingly proletarian or semiproletarian. Such economic developments are characteristic, for example, of Central America over the past two decades, and they help to explain the nature of the actually unfolding revolution there.[\[123\]](#)

Any uncritical acceptance of Rodriguez's thirteen-year-old essay could result in a serious misperception of the peasantry and an *underestimation of the proletariat*. This hardly means that revolutionaries can either write off the peasantry or expect the working class to introduce instant socialism. It *does* mean that the dynamics described in Trotsky's theory of permanent revolution are even more generally applicable today than was the case three-quarters of a century ago.



## IX. The Age of Permanent Revolution

The theory of permanent revolution is a Marxist tool that goes farther than any other in explaining the revolutionary victories and defeats of our century; yet, paradoxically, it is ignored or rejected by the great majority of revolutionary-minded people in the world, including those who have actually made revolutions. Why is this the case, and what does it mean for Trotskyists?

A fundamental reason for the widespread rejection of Trotsky's theory is rooted in the triumph of Stalinism in the USSR and the world Communist movement in the 1920s. This is a momentous and complex historical phenomenon that cannot be analyzed here, although the main components of such an analysis can be found in Trotsky's writings themselves.[\[124\]](#) What is most obvious, however, is that the theory of permanent revolution runs counter to the interests of the privileged bureaucratic layers that rule the USSR: It stands as a challenge to their narrow pragmatism and bureaucratic conservatism in international affairs; it undercuts their own ideological orientation rooted in the idea of "socialism in one country" and detente with imperialism; and it at least implies the eventual overthrow of the privileged bureaucracy itself.

In the world movement that the Stalinist bureaucracy dominates, and even in the revolutionary movements to which it gives (often inconsistent) assistance, it is unwise if not suicidal to embrace such profoundly subversive ideas as Trotsky offers. (Lenin is tolerated only as the inescapable founding father of the Soviet state, reduced as much as possible to a harmless icon.) Such pressures have bred theoretical inclinations and intellectual fashions that carry many revolutionary-minded people in a detour around Trotsky's works, if not in the opposite direction.

The perspective of Lenin and Trotsky was rooted in working-class internationalism. Lenin, after the Bolshevik revolution, stressed the importance of "converting the dictatorship of the proletariat from a national dictatorship (i.e., existing in a single country and incapable of determining world politics) into an international one (i.e., a dictatorship of the proletariat involving at least several advanced countries, and capable of exercising a decisive influence upon world politics as a whole)." He explained the Bolshevik perspective this way: "Either the international revolution comes to our assistance, and in that case our victory will be fully assured, or we shall do our modest revolutionary work in the conviction that even in the event of defeat we shall have served the cause of revolution and that our experience will benefit other revolutions.... We [are] working not only for ourselves, but also for the international revolution."[\[125\]](#)

In the face of the defeat of the European revolutions in the 1920s, however, the bureaucracy then crystallizing in the USSR opted for the narrow nationalism of "working only for ourselves," disguised under the reactionary slogan of "socialism in one country" and the seemingly internationalist appeal of "defending the homeland of socialism." This had a devastating effect on the cadres of the Third International. Defense of the USSR, as defined by the privileged bureaucracy, came to be seen as more important than advancing the revolution in one's own country. Even those who later refused to follow Stalin's

orders and who assumed the leadership of revolutions in their own countries (Tito in Yugoslavia and Mao in China, for example) did so more from the standpoint of revolutionary nationalism than of the revolutionary internationalism of the early Communist International. This has been reflected in the competition of such countries as the USSR, China, and Yugoslavia to get a better deal with U.S. imperialism—whether at the expense of each other or at the expense of the revolutionary struggles of other peoples.

The decline of the revolutionary internationalism of the early Comintern has also had an impact on non-Stalinist revolutionaries in the post-World War II period. They have often operated within a revolutionary-nationalist framework that blurs the needs and struggles of the working class into a generalized “anti-imperialism,” and that tends to reduce *internationalism* simply to maintaining fraternal relations with “progressive” and “anti-imperialist” governments. Lenin's commitment to an international working-class government, and his subordination of national struggles to the needs of the world revolution, cannot be said to be central to the outlook of many of these revolutionaries.

For some, perhaps, the failure of the working class of the advanced capitalist countries to make a revolution rules out the viability of Lenin's (and, therefore, of Trotsky's) perspective. For others, it is becoming increasingly evident that both the need and the potential exist for a strong world party of socialist revolution such as the early Third International sought to be. Yet such an organization, which would obviously find much of value in Trotsky's contributions, has been difficult to establish.

Such an organization is what Trotsky hoped the Fourth International might become. Since World War II, however, both capitalism and Stalinism have proved to be far more resilient than militants of the Fourth International had expected. Some have sought to survive their isolation by “hardening” their Trotskyism into rigid—ultimately schematic, dogmatic, and sectarian—patterns, thus deepening their isolation from other class-struggle and revolutionary forces. This reaction has made more difficult fruitful exchanges between Trotskyists and revolutionaries coming from other traditions.

Yet another factor is that aside from the Russian revolution, no other socialist revolution has been led by partisans of Trotsky's perspective. This obviously has an impact on revolutionaries who look for inspiration to those who are perceived to have brought about recent revolutionary victories.

It is worth noting, however, that even Stalinist-led parties that have been swept into power by triumphant revolutions have felt compelled to offer theoretical explanations which, while not mentioning Trotsky, give ground to his theory.

The Yugoslav revolution, for example, has been explained by Yugoslav Communist theoretician Edward Kardelj as follows:

The war of national liberation [against the Nazis] had as a result in our country a process of national revolution that assumed a more and more overtly socialist character. This

*uninterrupted revolutionary process* went through different phases from the beginning of the war until now.... But what gives it its essential character—from the start of the national insurrection until now—is the leading role of the working class with the Communist Party at its head.... From the very beginning, our Party was conscious of the inevitable character of this process, and it was with such a perspective in mind that it implemented its policies during the war. *The question of the preparation and the development of the socialist revolution was for the Party inseparable from the question of the development of the insurrection for national liberation.* [\[126\]](#)

The Chinese revolution has been explained by Mao Tse-tung in a similar way:

The foundation of the People's Republic of China in 1949 heralded the advent of the democratic revolution and the beginning of the transition towards socialism. Three years were still needed to complete the agrarian reform. But from the moment of the establishment of the People's Republic, we began to confiscate and nationalize the bureaucratic capitalist enterprises which represented 80 per cent of the country's fixed investment in industry and transport.... It is, therefore, erroneous to believe that after Liberation “the Chinese revolution, in its first stage, was essentially a democratic revolution which only later evolved little by little into a socialist revolution.” [\[127\]](#)

The words Mao is polemicizing against, by the way, are in the 1959 *Soviet Handbook of Political Economy*, which was inclined to cling to the Stalinist formulation of the 1920's. Another Chinese Communist theoretician, Lu-Ding-yi, summed up the new Chinese perspective by saying that “the democratic revolution must transform itself into a socialist revolution by the permanent revolution... .” [\[128\]](#)

Ho Chi Minh wrote that although Vietnam is “a backward agrarian country,” its revolution takes the form of a “*direct* passage to socialism... without going through the capitalist stage.” And Le Duan explained:

In countries where the workers and the peasants play the decisive role and where the vanguard of the working class holds the leadership of the revolution, the victory of the national and democratic revolution is not only a victory of the people against imperialism and feudalism but also a victory of the proletariat over the native bourgeoisie, the victory of a new state power. *To carry out well the national democratic revolution also means to begin the socialist revolution.* The workers' and peasants' state under the leadership of the proletariat immediately takes up the historic tasks of the dictatorship of the proletariat: to promote the socialist revolution and build socialism. In our time, the national democratic revolution led by the working class is, therefore, necessarily linked to the socialist revolution. [\[129\]](#)

The Cuban revolution, in contrast to the other three we have touched upon, was *not* made under the leadership of a Stalinist party. The Cuban Stalinists of the Popular Socialist Party merged with the revolutionary July 26th Movement of Fidel Castro after the revolution triumphed, however, and its former cadres have influenced the formal writings on theory by the new Cuban Communist Party (often at odds with theoretical ideas

expressed in more practical contexts, as in Fidel Castro's speeches). Be that as it may, the *Programmatic Platform of the Communist Party of Cuba* (1976) explained:

The Cuban Revolution... has confirmed the main Leninist theses on the revolution and the possibility of its uninterrupted course until turning into a socialist revolution. There is no unsurmountable barrier between the democratic-popular and anti-imperialist stage and the socialist stage. In the era of imperialism, both are part of a single process, in which national-liberation and democratic measures—which at times have already a socialist tinge—pave the way for genuinely socialist ones. The decisive and defining element of this process is who leads it, which class wields political power.[\[130\]](#)

This hardly means that the Cuban Communist Party has developed a full and consistently applied theory of permanent revolution. But the attempt to describe the realities of the Cuban experience naturally results in a description of the permanent revolution, which—as we've seen—is also the case with other revolutions that have overturned capitalism.

One factor enabling non-Trotskyist theoreticians to articulate—“without Trotsky”—formulations that parallel the theory of permanent revolution is the reality we documented and stressed earlier. The essence of Trotsky's theory can be found in the heart of the Bolshevik program from 1917 onward. The Leninism of Lenin, from at least 1917 through 1923, contains the insights Stalinists have tirelessly castigated as “Trotskyist.” Disastrous compromises and betrayals (China in 1927, Spain in 1936-39, Vietnam in 1945 and 1954, Iran in 1953, Indonesia in 1965, Chile in 1973, etc.) have flowed from perspectives theoretically grounded in Stalin's distorted “two-stage revolution” version of Lenin's 1905 theory. But whenever capitalism has been overturned, the orientation Lenin offered from 1917 onward must be utilized to explain the dynamics of victory. This strikingly confirms the revolutionary continuity of Lenin and Trotsky. It also helps to explain how not only Stalinist-trained theoreticians but, even more important, also honest revolutionaries having no familiarity with Trotsky's works can, by referring to Lenin and to their own experience, develop seemingly “Trotskyist” formulations and approaches. In recent years there has been a significant increase of such revolutionaries.

Perhaps this is what has inspired Jack Barnes to move onto his present course. The logic might run as follows: “The world Trotskyist movement is small and has limited influence. The world Communist movement is enormous and has state power in a number of countries. The Cuban current within that movement, comparatively unencumbered by Stalinist influences and residue, constitutes a vital revolutionary force. If we can only end our fixation on Trotsky and adapt....”

This is an understandable impulse, and it has been felt in our movement before. Yet it has its dangers, some of which were discussed as early as 1929 in a letter from Trotsky to a Czech comrade. Trotsky summarized the views of his correspondent in this way:

You consider that so-called “Trotskyism” is in fact an application of the methods of Marx and Lenin to the contemporary period. If you mark yourself off from Trotskyism it is, as

you explain not from considerations of principle but from tactical ones. The members of the [Communist] party are so confused, in your words, by the specter of “Trotskyism” that it is necessary for the time being to present our views in disguise.[\[131\]](#)

Trotsky went on to warn his comrade:

“Trotskyism” has ceased to be an indifferent label [in the world Communist movement]—it is filled with the content of the whole life of the Comintern from the past six years. You cannot subject the contemporary errors to criticism and propose a correct solution without expounding the views officially condemned under the name of “Trotskyism.” And if for pedagogical reasons you distance yourself in words from Trotskyism, there still remains politically the question of your relation to a definite international tendency: the Left Opposition. You risk falling victim tomorrow to the contradictions of your position. One of two things: either you must each time make clear in what you disagree with the Left Opposition, and consequently wage a factional struggle against it—or you will be forced to take off your mask and admit that you were only pretending to be an “anti-Trotskyist” in order to defend the ideas of the Communist Left Opposition. I do not know which is worse.

No, a game of hide-and-seek in politics is an absolutely impermissible thing. I have already quoted several times for various reasons the words of a certain French writer, “If you hide your soul from others, in the end you will no longer be able to find it yourself.”[\[132\]](#)

Indeed, single-minded and schematic adaptation to the Cuban current in the world Communist movement has resulted in the transformation of Jack Barnes and his circle. Far from merely wearing an “anti-Trotskyist mask,” they are waging a factional struggle against the Trotskyist majority in the Fourth International and are calling for a line that would result in the political (and ultimately the organizational) liquidation of the Fourth International itself.

If the Cuban Communist Party were presenting a rounded and consistent orientation to advance the world socialist revolution, then it would be in a position to provide the revolutionary-internationalist leadership that Barnes wishes to claim for it. But while recognizing the profoundly revolutionary role that it has played and continues to play in world politics, revolutionaries must also be able to comprehend limitations in the Cuban perspective. These limitations should neither be embraced nor glossed over, but discussed in a frank and comradely manner.

Limitations in the Cuban perspective cropped up even in regard to the Latin American revolution, not long after the appearance of Rodriguez's article. Speaking at a press conference in Chile in 1971, Fidel Castro indicated that Cuba's “uninterrupted revolution” might not be applicable for other countries, that Salvador Allende's left-reformist popular front government in Chile and the “progressive-nationalist” military junta in Peru might provide other paths to socialism: “The ways so far have been those of classic revolutionary struggle. One new way: the Chilean process. Another variant which

may very well mark the beginning of a process whose future we cannot predict is the case of Peru.... That is why I said new ways are appearing, and this makes us happy, not unhappy.”[\[133\]](#) This pragmatic approach, unlike the revolutionary Marxist analyses of Fourth Internationalists at that time, failed to identify the fatal weaknesses in the Chilean and Peruvian paths that would lead to tragic defeats.

Yet these 1971 views of Castro are consistent with the ambiguously worded formulations in Rodriguez's 1970 article. For example:

The ideas of Marx and Lenin are always distorted when, in the name of revolutionary impatience, one seeks to “eliminate” the bourgeois-democratic period in order to “hasten” the arrival of socialism (without understanding that this is a good way of postponing it)—as if history could be manipulated without regard for the social factors that determine its development.[\[134\]](#)

There are echoes here of Plekhanov's outmoded perspective and of Stalin's false counterposition: first the democratic revolution, later the socialist revolution. And yet, the orientation of the Cuban leadership also reflects Cuba's own positive, even if eclectic, revolutionary experience. Jack Barnes approaches this complex reality in the same schematic, one-sided manner as an anti-Castro sectarian—though each chooses to see only the opposite side of the reality, which leads either to blind adulation or blind hostility.

The ambiguities and contradictions of the Castroist orientation hardly mean that Castroism is not revolutionary. But it is worth recalling a still relevant insight of Plekhanov's: “One must first of all bear in mind that a revolutionary is not the revolution and that *theories of revolutionaries* far from always and not in all their parts deserve the name of *revolutionary theories*.”[\[135\]](#)

Jack Barnes' adaptation to the weakest side in the outlook of the Cuban Communist Party will damage the effort to build a politically effective revolutionary movement in the United States and elsewhere. Such a politically ineffectual adaptation will hardly win respect from the revolutionaries of Cuba. “We shall judge the conduct of organizations not by what they say they are,” Fidel has aptly said, “but by what they prove they are, by what they do, by their conduct.”[\[136\]](#)

Revolutionary clarity, and mutual influence among revolutionaries, can be achieved only through a serious-minded discussion of political perspectives within the context or revolutionary activity. Far superior to the course offered by Jack Barnes is the orientation of the Fourth International:

It is the common experience of the revolutionary Marxists and the other revolutionary Latin American currents in all the unfolding struggles which will permit the clarification of these questions, the verification of the respective positions and the significance of the divergences, and the testing out of the possibilities of the coming together of different currents in the workers movement.[\[137\]](#)



The perspectives of the Cuban Communist Party contain yet another important limitation, one that requires honest discussion among all who participate in the struggle against imperialism and for the socialist revolution. This limitation involves the failure of the Cuban leadership to support struggles for workers' democracy in the bureaucratically deformed workers' states, the clearest case being the hostility shown toward Solidarnosc and the support given to the Jaruzelski junta in Poland. Although doubtlessly rooted in the Stalinist pressure from the USSR, this limitation may also reflect an ambivalence within sections of the Cuban leadership over the idea of thoroughgoing workers' democracy in Cuba itself (at least in regard to democratic debate and decision-making on national and international policies).

The importance of developing institutionalized forms of workers' democracy is suggested by Fidel himself:

It isn't a case of a group of superintelligent men directing the passive masses for their own good. That is not revolution. That cannot happen in real life, because nobody can solve problems through administrative methods.... Socialism can go forward... only through the widest possible participation of the masses.[\[138\]](#)

Yet Trotskyists have been compelled to note, in reporting on Cuban realities, that “the institutionalization achieved since 1976 has contradictory aspects.... There exists at a local level a democracy with real participation, while at the central level there is no participation with real decision-making power.”[\[139\]](#) Of course, this is openly recognized by other partisans of the Cuban revolution as well—for example, Carlos Rafael Rodriguez. Rodriguez's candor in dealing with such questions is characteristic of Cuba's leaders and is a sign of the revolution's continuing vitality. Yet there are aspects of his comments that raise serious questions.

Noting that the Cuban Communist Party is “the decisive instrument for communication between the leadership and the masses,” Rodriguez frankly acknowledges that the “political linkages” between the working class and the party are still insufficient. Similarly, “our unions are much better at transmitting the party's orientations to the working class than they are at gathering from the working class the desires, the criticisms, the suggestions to which the leadership has to be alert.” The Committees for the Defense of the Revolution “constitute now a permanent barometer of the feelings and judgments of our people,” although there is “sometimes a certain inhibition, an excessive caution in the exercise of criticism....” The Organs of People's Power reflect “an effort to achieve more complete participation by our people,” but Rodriguez adds that “the present processes of guiding society are very complex.”

Rodriguez explains this complexity as revolving around what he sees as insufficient “cultural, political, and ideological levels of the masses,” even twenty years after the triumph of the Cuban revolution. “If all segments of society were to participate,” he asserts, “they would need a level of scientific understanding of the economy greater than what our workers have achieved with only a sixth-grade education.” Until “adequate cultural and technical levels” are achieved in Cuba, he concludes, “a more complete and

mature form of self-government” will not be possible.[\[140\]](#) This orientation implies an incorrect vision “of superintelligent men directing the passive masses for their own good.” But as Fidel put it, “That is not revolution.”

The model of the dictatorship of the proletariat that Marx and Engels advocated was the Paris Commune of 1871, a thoroughgoing working-class democracy in which “plain workingmen for the first time dared to infringe upon the Governmental privilege of their 'natural superiors.'...” In fact, there is an unbreakable link between the revolutionary forms of democracy and the revolutionary strategy for achieving socialism. Central to Marxism is the understanding that “the emancipation of the working classes must be conquered by the working classes themselves.”[\[141\]](#) It would be absurd to try to dissolve the complexities of the revolutionary process into a few stirring slogans. But the fundamental principles underlying these Marxist watchwords have guided and, on the basis of rich experience, have been developed by such revolutionaries as Lenin, Luxemburg, and Trotsky. It is precisely the preservation, utilization, and extension of this revolutionary Marxism that is the basis of the Fourth International.

The Fourth International represents the only organized political current in the world today that addresses itself, in words and in action, *and from a revolutionary socialist standpoint*, to the problems in *each* of the three sectors of the world today: the advanced capitalist countries, the impoverished countries oppressed by imperialism, and the bureaucratically deformed workers' states. In large measure, this is a result of its adherence to the revolutionary-internationalist orientation provided by Trotsky's theory of permanent revolution. This represents the authentic continuity with Lenin's standpoint of 1917 and after.

On the fourth anniversary of the Bolshevik revolution, Lenin reviewed the revolutionary process that had unfolded in Russia. The perspective he sketched in 1921 corresponds both to the theory of permanent revolution and to the realities of the present era:

In order to consolidate the achievements of the bourgeois-democratic revolution for the peoples of Russia, we were obliged to go farther, and we did go farther. We solved the problems of the bourgeois-democratic revolution in passing, as a “by-product” of our main and genuinely *proletarian*-revolutionary, socialist activities. We have always said that reforms are a by-product of the revolutionary class struggle. We said—and proved it by deeds—that bourgeois-democratic reforms are a by-product of the proletariat, i.e., of the socialist revolution....

The Soviet system is one of the most vivid proofs, or manifestations, of how the one revolution develops into the other. The Soviet system provides the maximum of democracy for the workers and peasants; at the same time, it marks a break with *bourgeois* democracy and the rise of a *new*, epoch-making *type* of democracy, namely, proletarian democracy, or the dictatorship of the proletariat....

The first victory is *not yet the final victory*, and it was achieved by our October Revolution at the price of incredible difficulties and hardships, at the price of

unprecedented suffering, accompanied by a series of serious reverses and mistakes on our part.... We have made a start. When, at what date and time, and the proletarians of which nation will complete this process is not important. The important thing is that the ice has been broken; the road is open, and the way has been shown.[\[142\]](#)

This remains the standpoint of the Fourth International, but such ideas also provide inspiration for many others as well. Over the last two decades, new and often powerful revolutionary currents have arisen throughout the world outside the ranks of the Fourth International—in Central America and the Caribbean, in Africa, in the Middle East, in Poland, and elsewhere. There is a growing ferment within the working class of the advanced capitalist countries as well. The potential for a mass-based revolutionary international is greater now than has been the case for at least half a century. The Fourth International has a vital role to play in helping to draw together the elements that will make up this mass international and in contributing to the development of a revolutionary program which will enable that international to bring into being a socialist world.

If we hope to develop a revolutionary program adequate for our own time, we have much to learn from the experiences of others. There are militants and leaders of recent struggles and victories and triumphant revolutions who have much to teach. At the same time, the rich and decades-long accumulation of experience concentrated in the Fourth International, its theoretical heritage and the revolutionary continuity it represents, remains an invaluable contribution to the struggle for socialist revolution.

Just as it would be absurd for Trotskyists to counterpose themselves to those who are providing militant leadership in one or another sector of the converging revolutionary process, so would it be absurd to abandon the hard-won insights we can contribute to this process. There is no reason to abandon the theory of permanent revolution in the age of permanent revolution.

## Notes

[1.](#) Isaac Deutscher, “Introduction,” *The Age of Permanent Revolution, A Trotsky Anthology* (New York: Dell, 1964), 34.

[2.](#) Leon Trotsky, *The History of the Russian Revolution* (London: Pluto Press, 1977), 27.

[3.](#) Leon Trotsky, *The Third International After Lenin* (New York: Pathfinder Press, 1970), 45.

[4.](#) Leon Trotsky, *The Revolution Betrayed*, New York: Merit Publishers, 1965), 94.

[5.](#) Winfried Wolf, “The Worst Economic Crisis Since the Great Depression-and Worse to Come,” *International Viewpoint* 35 (1 August, 1983): 26-34.

[6.](#) Michael Lowy, *The Politics of Combined and Uneven Development* (London: New Left Books, 1981), 202-4.

[7.](#) See George Black, *Triumph of the People* (London: Zed Press, 1981); Henri Weber, *Nicaragua: the Sandinista Revolution* (London: Verso, 1981); Paul Le Blanc, "Permanent Revolution in Nicaragua" (Pittsburgh: unpublished manuscript, 1983). [This second work was later published by the Fourth Internationalist Tendency—Paul Le Blanc, *Permanent Revolution in Nicaragua* (New York: F.I.T., 1984).]

[8.](#) See an important two-part report to the United Secretariat of the Fourth International given by Andre Duret, contained in the following: "The Iranian Revolution Four Years After the February 1979 Insurrection," *International Viewpoint* 27 (31 March 1983): 16-25; and "The Crisis of the Iranian Revolution: The Perspective for Revolutionists in Iran Today," *International Viewpoint* 28 (18 April 1983): 17-26. Valuable information is also provided by a recent interview with an Iranian socialist in "Where the Revolution Stands Today," *Intercontinental Press*, 3 October 1983:554-57.

[9.](#) Jeff Frieden, "International Finance and the Third World," *MERIP Reports* 117 (September 1983): 3-11; Robert Samuelson, "Leaders Struggle With Managing World Debt," *Pittsburgh Press*, 4 October 1983.

[10.](#) Jacqueline Allio, "Solidarnosc's Challenge," *International Viewpoint* 36 (19 September 1983): 14-17; "New Advances by Solidarnosc," *International Viewpoint* 29 (2 May 1983): 7-9.

[11.](#) Dianne Feeley, "Growth of the Unemployed Movement," *International Viewpoint* 40 (14 November 1983): 19-22; Joseph Harris, "Meeting the Developing Crisis," *Economic Notes*, November 1982:2,12. See also the article by Wolf cited in note 1 above.

[12.](#) Fausto Amador and Sara Santiago, "Where Is Nicaragua Going?" *Intercontinental Press*, 11 June 1979,584.

[13.](#) Jack Barnes et al., *Towards an American Socialist Revolution* (New York: Pathfinder Press, 1970), 140.

[14.](#) *Ibid.*, 108.

[15.](#) Jack Barnes and Steve Clark, eds., *The Changing Face of U.S. Politics: Building a Party of Socialist Workers* (New York: Pathfinder Press, 1981), 88.

[16.](#) *Ibid.*, 53.

[17.](#) Mary-Alice Waters and Jack Barnes, *Proletarian Leadership in Power*, an Education for Socialists Bulletin (New York: Socialist Workers Party, 1980), 28-31.

[18.](#) Janice Lynn and David Frankel, *Imperialism vs. the Iranian Revolution* (New York: Pathfinder Press, 1981). The SWP leadership's position is further elaborated in *International Internal Information Bulletin*, No. 1 in 1982, May 1982, especially 3-20.

[19.](#) Larry Siegle, “Anti-Imperialist Fighters Meet,” *Intercontinental Press*, 26 July 1982, 639; Steve Bride, “Libya's Fight to Be Free of Imperialism,” *Militant*, 19 February 1983.

[20.](#) The SWP leadership's position opposing Polish solidarity work is offered in *Intercontinental Press*, 1 March 1982, and in *International Internal Information Bulletin*, No. 2 in 1982, May 1982, especially 2-13.

[21.](#) Suzanne Haig, “Korea: Two Contrasting Social Systems—Economic Advance in North, Poverty and Misery in South,” *Intercontinental Press*, 15 March 1982; William Gottlieb, “Is Soviet Economy Crisis-Ridden? Behind the Myths of U.S. Media,” *Militant*, 1 April 1983. See also George Johnson, “Bruising' USSR: U.S.-Seoul Policy,” *Militant*, 4 October 1983. While this article contains correct criticisms of U.S. imperialism, it gives the impression that the dictatorship of North Korea is based on “local organs of self-rule” with “a revolutionary and highly popular program.” Of the Stalinist dictator of that country, the *Militant* states: “Kim Il Sung, a leading resistance fighter against Japan [during World War II], came to power through this 1945 government. He has for many years served as president of the DPPK.” (The USSR is portrayed in this article in a similarly uncritical light) For an informative analysis of North Korea that is far more balanced, see Jon Halliday, “The North Korean Enigma,” *New Left Review* 127 (May/June 1981): 18-52. See also note 1 of chapter IX below.

[22.](#) Jack Barnes, “Their Trotsky and Ours: Communist Continuity Today,” *New Internationalist* 1 (Fall 1983): 28,81.

[23.](#) *Ibid.*, 81.

[24.](#) *Ibid.*, 28.

[25.](#) Lewis Carroll, *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland, Through the Looking Glass, The Hunting of the Snark* (New York: Modern Library, n.d.) 247.

[26.](#) Barnes, “Their Trotsky and Ours,” 73, 44,75.

[27.](#) Cited in Jack Barnes, “In Defense of Studying Lenin,” in *Party Organizer* (New York: Socialist Workers Party, April 1982), 14.

[28.](#) Barnes, “Their Trotsky and Ours,” 54; James P. Cannon, *The Socialist Workers Party in World War II* (New York: Pathfinder Press, 1975), 128.

[29.](#) Cannon, *The Socialist Workers Party in World War II*, 217.

[30.](#) Barnes, “Their Trotsky and Ours,” 73.

[31.](#) Leon Trotsky, *The Permanent Revolution and Results and Prospects* (New York: Pathfinder Press, 1969), 29-35; Leon Trotsky, *1905* (New York: Vintage, 1972), vii;

Leon Trotsky, *The Challenge of the Left Opposition, 1923-25* (New York: Pathfinder Press, 1975), 101.

[32.](#) Barnes, “Their Trotsky and Ours,” 45; Leon Trotsky, *The Challenge of the Left Opposition, 1926-27* (New York: Pathfinder Press, 1980), 179,176.

[33.](#) Trotsky, *Challenge, 1926-27*, 193.

[34.](#) Isaac Deutscher, *The Prophet Unarmed* (New York: Vintage, 1965), 300.

[35.](#) Trotsky, *Challenge, 1926-27*,130-31.

[36.](#) “The Last Words of Adolf Joffe,” in Joseph Hansen et al., *Leon Trotsky, The Man and His Work* (New York: Merit Publishers, 1969), 126.

[37.](#) Barnes, “Their Trotsky and Ours,” 45.

[38.](#) Trotsky, *Permanent Revolution*, 130.

[39.](#) Barnes, “Their Trotsky and Ours,” 82.

[40.](#) Ibid., 29.

[41.](#) Ibid., 11.

[42.](#) Ibid., 12.

[43.](#) Ibid., 12-13.

[44.](#) Ibid., 13,43.

[45.](#) Trotsky, *Permanent Revolution*, 172.

[46.](#) Barnes, “Their Trotsky and Ours,” 61.

[47.](#) Trotsky, *Permanent Revolution*, 172.

[48.](#) V.I. Lenin, “Letters on Tactics,” *Collected Works*, Vol. 24 (Moscow: Foreign Languages Publishing House, 1960-70), 47.

[49.](#) Barnes, “Their Trotsky and Ours,” 62; Leon Trotsky, *Leon Trotsky on China* (New York: Monad Press, 1976), 586.

[50.](#) Barnes, Their Trotsky and Ours,” 62.



[51.](#) V.I. Lenin, "The Revolutionary-Democratic Dictatorship of the Proletariat and the Peasantry," *Collected Works* 8:294,297.

[52.](#) Barnes, "Their Trotsky and Ours," 25.

[53.](#) Ibid., 84. Readers are urged to consult the following: V.I. Lenin, *The Rights of Nations to Self-Determination* (New York: International Publishers, 1951); Horace B. Davis, *Nationalism and Socialism: Marxist and Labor Theories of Nationalism to 1917* (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1967); Michael Lowy, "Marxists and the National Question," *New Left Review* 96 (March/April 1976): 81-100.

[54.](#) J.V. Stalin, *Problems of Leninism* (Peking: Foreign Languages Press, 1976), 165-68.

[55.](#) Carlos Rafael Rodriguez, "Lenin and the Colonial Question," *New International* 1 (Fall 1983): 143.

[56.](#) George Plekhanov, "Socialism and the Political Struggle" (1883), *Selected Philosophical Works*, Vol. 1 (Moscow, Progress Publishers, 1977), 60, 61-62,97-98.

[57.](#) Plekhanov, "Our Differences" (1884), *Selected Philosophical Works*, 1:341; "Socialism and the Political Struggle," *Selected Philosophical Works* 1:96,101.

[58.](#) Plekhanov, "Socialism and the Political Struggle" *Selected Philosophical Works* 1:104.

[59.](#) On the drafting of the 1903 program, see N. K. Krupskaya, *Reminiscences of Lenin* (New York: International Publishers, 1970), 90-91, and Samuel H. Baron, *Plekhanov, The Father of Russian Marxism* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1966), 223-24. Regarding the debates on program at the 1903 congress of the RSDLP, Krupskaya notes that "during the debates on these questions Vladimir Ilyich felt more than usually close to Plekhanov." For the text of the program, and relevant contributions to the programmatic debates by both Lenin and Plekhanov, see *1903, Second Congress of the Russian Social Democratic Labor Party* (London: New Park Publications, 1978), 3-9, 255-56, 300-302.

[60.](#) V. I. Lenin, "Two Tactics of Social Democracy in the Democratic Revolution," *Selected Works*, Vol. 1 (New York: International Publishers, 1967), 513, 484, 486, 515.

[61.](#) V. I. Lenin, "A Revolution of the 1789 or the 1848 Type?" *Collected Works*, 8:257.

[62.](#) V. I. Lenin, "Social Democracy's Attitude Toward the Peasant Movement," *Collected Works* 9: 236-37.

[63.](#) V. I. Lenin, "The Stages, the Trend, and the Prospects of the Revolution," *Collected Works* 10:91-92.

[64.](#) Lenin, *Selected Works* 1 (1967 ed.): 541, 492, 517.

[65.](#) Ibid., 517.

[66.](#) Trotsky, *Permanent Revolution*, 191.

[67.](#) Barnes, “In Defense of Studying Lenin,” 11.

[68.](#) Citations in Stephen F. Cohen, *Bukharin and the Bolshevik Revolution* (New York: Vintage, 1975), 39-40,41.

[69.](#) V. I. Lenin, “Letters to Alexandra Kollontai,” *Collected Works* 35: 286.

[70.](#) V. I. Lenin, “Letter to Inessa Armand,” *Collected Works* 35: 289.

[71.](#) Quotation in Cohen, *Bukharin*, 42. This question is discussed at some length, and documentation is provided, in *ibid.*, 39-42, 398-99, and also in Neil Harding, *Lenin's Political Thought*, vol. 2 (New York: St Martin's Press, 1981), 83-141,334-38.

[72.](#) V. I. Lenin, “The State and Revolution,” *Selected Works*,2 (1967 ed.): 309.

[73.](#) V. I. Lenin, *Letters From Afar* (Moscow: Progress Publishers, 1971), 33-34.

[74.](#) Trotsky, 7095, 330.

[75.](#) Leon Trotsky, *On the Paris Commune* (New York: Pathfinder Press, 1970), 29.

[76.](#) Trotsky, “Revolution and War In China,” in *On China*, 587. This essay was the introduction to the first edition of Harold Isaacs's *The Tragedy of the Chinese Revolution*.

[77.](#) Barnes, “Their Trotsky and Ours,” 63.

[78.](#) Lenin, *Collected Works* 24:45, 50.

[79.](#) Quotation in Trotsky, *The History of the Russian Revolution*, Vol. 1,326-327.

[80.](#) Lenin, “The Proletarian Revolution and the Renegade Kautsky,” *Selected Works* 3 (1967 ed.): 104.

[81.](#) Trotsky, *Permanent Revolution*, 32, 34.

[82.](#) “The Last Words of Adolf Joffe,” in Joseph Hansen, et. al., *Leon Trotsky, The Man and His Work*, 126.

[83.](#) Barnes, “Their Trotsky and Ours,” 42. In the Lenin passage cited in the Barnes article, there is a mistaken substitution: Lenin's *then* becomes a *than*. The authors of this pamphlet checked the original quotation, which can be found in Lenin's *Collected Works* 29:310.

[84.](#) V. I. Lenin, “The Place of the Communist International in History,” *Selected Works* Vol. X (New York: International Publishers, 1938), 31, 34.

[85.](#) Rodriguez, “Lenin and the Colonial Question,” 142, 140, 139.

[86.](#) “No tsar, but a workers' government” was a slogan put forward by Parvus. Trotsky was critical of this formulation and never used it. See Trotsky, *Challenge*, 1923-25, 278-79, and *Permanent Revolution*, 166. For Trotsky's most balanced evaluation of Parvus' contribution to the theory of permanent revolution, see “Three Conceptions of the Russian Revolution ” in *Writings of Leon Trotsky, 1939-40* (New York: Pathfinder Press, 1973), 166.

[87.](#) Among the participants in the Russian revolutionary movement who give no indication that Rodriguez's account is in any way accurate are the following: N. K. Krupskaya, *Reminiscences of Lenin* ; Anatoly V. Lunacharsky, *Revolutionary Silhouettes* (New York: Hill & Wang 1968); Solomon M. Schwarz, *The Russian Revolution of 1905* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1967). Such eyewitness accounts of the 1917 Russian revolution as John Reed's *Ten Days That Shook the World* (New York: International Publishers, 1926) also contradict Rodriguez. The same is true of such scholarly works as E. H. Carr, *The Bolshevik Revolution, 1917-1923*, 3 vols. (Baltimore: Penguin Books, 1966) and Alexander Rabinowitch, *The Bolsheviks Come to Power* (New York: W. W. Norton, 1978).

[88.](#) Trotsky, *1905*, 49.

[89.](#) Trotsky, *Permanent Revolution*, 69-67.

[90.](#) Ibid., 75, 217, 73; also see Trotsky, *1905*, 49.

[91.](#) Trotsky, *Permanent Revolution*, 69, 70, 72.

[92.](#) Ibid., 75, 208.

[93.](#) Ibid., 76, 101-2.

[94.](#) Ibid., 208; Trotsky, *1905*, 317.

[95.](#) Trotsky, *Permanent Revolution*, 217, 230-31.

[96.](#) Ibid., 80, 278.

[97.](#) Ibid., 77; Trotsky, *1905*, 317-18.

[98.](#) Trotsky, *Permanent Revolution*, 115.

[99.](#) James Pinkney Harrison, *The Long March to Power* (New York: Praeger Publishers, 1972) 9; Jean Chesneaux, Francoise Le Barbier, and Marie-Claire Bergere, *China, From the 1911 Revolution to Liberation* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1977), 123. See also Leslie Evans, Editor's Introduction," in Leon Trotsky, *On China*, 17-21.

[100.](#) Trotsky, *On China*, 129, 269.

[101.](#) Trotsky, *Permanent Revolution*, 278-79.

[102.](#) Ibid., 131, 132, 133.

[103.](#) N. Bukharin and E. Preobrazhensky, *The ABC of Communism* (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1969) 234-35.

[104.](#) Ibid., 124-25.

[105.](#) Ibid., 125, 435, 236, 207.

[106.](#) Ibid., 184.

[107.](#) Ibid., 185.

[108.](#) E. H. Can, "Editor's Introduction" to Bukharin and Preobrazhensky, *ABC of Communism*, 17-18.

[109.](#) Leon Trotsky, *Writings of Leon Trotsky, 1929* (New York: Pathfinder Press, 1975), 202.

[110.](#) Trotsky, *Third International After Lenin*, 184-85.

[111.](#) Rodriguez, 144.

[112.](#) Barnes, "Their Trotsky and Ours," 52, 53.

[113.](#) *Nisproverzhenie* is a noun commonly translated into English as "overthrow," and it is derived from the verb *nisprovergnut'*, which means literally "throw down; bring down; bring low, cause the collapse or downfall of; etc." This may have misled the translator. *Nisproverzhenie* also has a figurative meaning, which the four-volume Soviet Academy of Sciences dictionary gives as follows: "By demonstrating the worthlessness, bankruptcy, etc., of something, to deprive it of recognition or respecting." In fact, "to subvert" is one of the standard definitions given for *nisprovergnut'*. See *Slovar Russkogo Yazyka* [Dictionary of the Russian Language], 4 vols., published by the Academy of the Social Sciences, USSR Institute of Linguistics, Moscow, 1957-1961). The original Russian passage in Trotsky's work reads: "...vynuzhdena budet s samogo nachala proizvesti reshitelneishee portryasenie i nisproverzhenie burzhuanznoi sobstvennosti v gorode i v dereune." (From the original manuscript in the Harvard Archives, Houghton

Library, Harvard University.) Our thanks to George Saunders and Tom Twiss for clarification on these points.

[114.](#) Rodriguez, 118.

[115.](#) Edgar Snow, *Red Star Over China* (New York: Grove Press, 1968), 423-24. See also Harold R. Isaacs, *The Tragedy of the Chinese Revolution* (New York: Atheneum, 1968); Benjamin I. Schwartz, *Chinese Communism and the Rise of Mao* (New York: Harper Torchbooks, 1958); Wang Fan-hsi, *Chinese Revolutionary: Memoirs 1919-1949* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1980); Trotsky, *On China*, especially the introductory essay by Peng Shu-tse, 31-97.

[116.](#) J. V. Stalin, *On the Opposition* (Peking: Foreign Languages Press, 1974), 507-9.

[117.](#) Trotsky, *On China*, 608. It should be noted that when Trotskyist forces in China finally unified into a single organization, a controversy arose over precisely the 1928 quotation that Barnes and Rodriguez discuss. Some wanted to interpret it as calling for the immediate *abolition* of private property. Ch'en Tu-hsiu disagreed and, with Trotsky's approval, won his comrades to the interpretation that anticipated a revolutionary *shake-up* of property relations. See Wang Fan-hsi, *Chinese Revolutionary*, 143-45.

[118.](#) Nym Wales, *Inside Red China* (New York: Doubleday Doran & Co., 1939), 223,209.

[119.](#) Ibid., 209; Conrad Brandt, Benjamin Schwartz, and John K. Fairbank, eds., *A Documentary History of Chinese Communism* (New York: Atheneum, 1967), 305,304.

[120.](#) See Roland Lew, "Maoism and the Chinese Revolution," in *The Socialist Register* 1975, ed. by Ralph Miliband and John Saville (London: Merlin Press, 1975), 147-48. See also Peng Shu-tse, *The Chinese Communist Party in Power* (New York: Monad Press, 1980), 55-65, 153-70.

[121.](#) On land reform in China, see Lew, 158, and also Harrison, *The Long March to Power*, 436. In fact a radical land reform was carried out in the Communist-controlled areas in the 1946-49 period. A profound shake-up in bourgeois property relations resulted in 178 million peasants obtaining land *before* the overthrow of the Kuomintang government. The October 10, 1947, Agrarian Law demonstrated the recognition of the absolute necessity of the revolutionary forces to ally with the poor and middle peasantry. It channeled the peasant war that helped to topple the regime. And it was the handwriting on the wall for the national bourgeoisie, despite the Communist Party's stated willingness to compromise with the Chinese industrialists. Similar dynamics are revealed in the Vietnamese and Salvadoran revolutions, as governmental structures set up in liberated zones foreshadow the radical direction the mass-based struggle is compelled to take. For China, see Jack Belden, *China Shakes the World* (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1970), 201-3, and Harrison, *The Long March to Power*, 409-14. For Vietnam, see Max Clos, "Political Dynamics in South Vietnam," and Eqbal Ahmad, "Revolutionary

Warfare,” in Marvin E. Gettleman, ed., *Vietnam: History, Documents, and Opinions*, 2nd ed. (New York: Mentor Books, 1970), 405-14, 390-401. For El Salvador see Robert Armstrong and Janet Shenk, *El Salvador: The Face of Revolution* (Boston: South End Press, 1982), 203-9.

[122.](#) Rodriguez, 133.

[123.](#) There are a number of recent efforts to develop a general Marxist analysis incorporating such new developments. See Ernest Mandel, *Late Capitalism* (London: New Left Books, 1975), 310-76; Robin Cohen, Peter C. W. Gutkind, and Phyllis Brazier, eds., *Peasants and Proletarians: The Struggles of Third World Workers* (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1979); Peter Waterman, “Workers in the Third World,” *Monthly Review*, May 1980; A. Sivanandan, “Imperialism in the Silicon Age,” *Monthly Review*, July-August 1980; Alain Lipietz, “Towards Global Fordism?” *New Left Review*, 132 (March/April 1982). On Central America, see James Petras and Morris H. Morley, “Economic Expansion, Political Crisis and U.S. Policy in Central America,” *Contemporary Marxism*, Summer 1981, and Jaime Biderman, “The Development of Capitalism in Nicaragua: A Political Economic History,” *Latin American Perspectives*, Winter 1983. These developments are also integrated into the perspective of the Fourth International—see Ernest Mandel, “Report on the World Political Situation,” *1979 World Congress of the Fourth International: Major Resolutions and Reports* (New York: Intercontinental Press/Inprecor, 1980), 39-40.

[124.](#) For example, see Trotsky's *Revolution Betrayed*. More recent analyses of the USSR that are more or less consistent with Trotsky's framework can be found in the following: Isaac Deutscher, *The Unfinished Revolution: Russia 1917-1967* (London: Oxford University Press, 1967); Ernest Mandel, “Ten Theses on the Social and Economic Laws Governing the Society Transitional Between Capitalism and Socialism,” *Critique* #3, Autumn 1974; N. Pestov, “Communism and the Soviet Union at the End of the Twentieth Century,” in Roy Medvedev, ed., *Samizdat Register II* (New York: W. W. Morton, 1981). A valuable discussion of Stalinism's impact on the world Communist movement is Ernest Mandel, *From Stalinism to Eurocommunism* (London: New Left Books, 1978).

[125.](#) Lenin, “Preliminary Draft Theses on the National and Colonial Questions,” in *Theses, Resolutions and Manifestos of the First Four Congresses of the Third International* (London: Ink Links, 1980), 79; Lenin, “The Tactics of the R.C.P.(B),” *Selected Works IX* (1930s ed.): 226-27.

[126.](#) Cited in Lowy, *The Politics of Combined and Uneven Development*, 114.

[127.](#) Cited in *Ibid.*, 126-27.

[128.](#) Cited in *Ibid.*, 126.

[129.](#) Cited in *Ibid.*, 138-39.



[130.](#) *Programmatic Platform of the Communist Party of Cuba* (Havana: Department of Revolutionary Orientation of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of Cuba, 1976), 47.

[131.](#) Trotsky, *Writings, 1929*, 180.

[132.](#) Ibid., 181.

[133.](#) Fidel Castro, *Fidel Castro on Chile*, an Education for Socialists Bulletin (New York: Socialist Workers Party, 1982), 105-6.

[134.](#) Rodriguez, 140.

[135.](#) Plekhanov, *Selected Philosophical Works* 1:103, 357.

[136.](#) Fidel Castro, *Fidel Castro Speaks* (New York: Grove Press, 1969), 165.

[137.](#) “The Cuban Revolution, the Castroist Current, and the Fourth International,” *Intercontinental Press*, 19 October 1981, 1031.

[138.](#) Fidel Castro, “The Need for a Democratic Labor Movement,” in *Fidel Castro: Speeches*, Vol. 2 (New York: Pathfinder Press, 1983), 129-30.

[139.](#) “The Cuban Revolution, the Castroist Current, and the Fourth International,” *Intercontinental Press*, 19 October 1981, 1027. See also Joseph Hansen, *Dynamics of the Cuban Revolution: The Trotskyist View* (New York: Pathfinder Press, 1978); Livio Maitan, “Cuba Twenty Years After the Revolution,” *Intercontinental Press*, 23, April 1979, 419-424; Fred Denfert, “People's Power' in Cuba,” *International Viewpoint* (28 January 1982): 20-24.

[140.](#) “An Interview with Carlos Rafael Rodriguez,” in *Fidel Castro: Speeches*, Vol. 2, 316-18.

[141.](#) Karl Marx, “The Civil War in France” and “General Rules of the International Workingmen's Association,” in Karl Marx and Frederick Engels, *Selected Works*, Vol. 2 (Moscow: Progress Publishers, 1973), 224, 19. This standpoint is also incorporated into the 1919 “Program of the Communist Party of Russia” reprinted in Bukharin and Preobrazhensky, *The ABC of Communism*, 435-39.

[142.](#) V. I. Lenin, “Fourth Anniversary of the October Revolution,” *Selected Works* 3 (1967 ed.): 638, 639, 641.